

FIRST THINGS

A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life

Christianity in the Mirror of Jewish Thought
Alan L. Mittleman

Victims Unlimited
John P. Sisk

Pluralism and the Otherness of World Religions
S. Mark Heim

Christ, Culture & the New Europe
Rémi Brague

Opinions and Reviews: Evangelicals and Economic Development
The Pope, the Emperor, and the First Amendment • Monism and
Pluralism • Elizabeth Kristol on Roger Rosenblatt • Gregory Wolfe
Charlotte Allen • Robert W. Jenson • William McGurn
Jean Bethke Elshtain • Robin Darling Young



Richard John Neuhaus

The Public Square

A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life

Western Civilization

A Conference Sponsored by
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Dr. James Hitchcock of St. Louis University
Irving Kristol of *The Public Interest*
Dr. John Lukacs
Rev. Richard John Neuhaus of *First Things* and the Institute on Religion and Public Life
Rev. Marvin R. O'Connell of Notre Dame University
Dr. Patrick Riley of the Catholic League and the Catholic University of America

Respondents

Dr. Hadley Arkes of Amherst College
Judge Robert H. Bork
Dr. Thomas Dillon of Thomas Aquinas College
Dr. Ralph McInerny of *Crisis* and Notre Dame University
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- ▶ colonization and the Catholic Church

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A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life

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FIRST THINGS

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Tithing for the Poor

The question, "What Should We Do About the Poor?" (April), is at least as old as the Bible. The real question, or perhaps more aptly stated, the real problem has more to do with the manner of our response. Private social responsibility has been increasingly replaced with socialized public responsibility, and it simply has not worked. . . .

Why not use the biblical paradigm? How about the equivalent of the triennial tithe for the poor on an annualized basis? . . . Individuals could contribute a "poverty percentage" of their income as a tax liability to certified institutions. Amounts not contributed would be due as taxes. . . .

There would be little need for Welfare Departments, and their massive overhead/transactional costs. Dealing with poverty would again become a personal, communal responsibility, and more of the money designated for the poor would actually be available for them, administered by those who actually know the community. . . .

The continuing commitment of Americans to our churches and synagogues in the face of imposed secularization is a testament to our traditional values. Recently published analyses of charitable giving reaffirm the generosity of the American people. The diversity of our volunteer organizations attests to our ability to mobilize resources to address the problems that face us. It is time we rid ourselves of the socialist bureaucracies and return to traditional responses that bring us together in common cause to solve our community problems.

Nevin J. Mindlin
Harrisburg, PA

Teach Us

Bravo to Nancy W. Yos' article, "Teach Me: A Catholic *Cri de Coeur*" (April).

I too am a victim, if that is the right word, of the CCD experience. I was so disgusted with "the coloring books," as Ms. Yos puts it, of Catholic

education that by seventh grade I decided this Catholic stuff was a banal waste of time. In fact, my disaffection became so severe that even today I have yet to be confirmed in the Church.

Only recently have I discovered the rich history of the Catholic tradition. It is not the foolish superstition that my agnostic and Protestant friends had always told me that it is. Nor is it the humanistic Marxism that too many leftist priests had implied.

I truly believe that the awful experience I had as a child . . . stunted my spiritual growth. Only now am I starting to recover from that experience. . . .

John Patrick Feehery
Alexandria, VA

As a conservative evangelical Protestant, I surprised myself by how deeply my heart cheered for Nancy Yos as she groped for knowledge of the rich heritage that belongs to her as a Roman Catholic. As I followed her spiritual journey and read her challenge to her own church, I was vividly taken back to my own childhood as a Lutheran. My only memories were being taught at Easter that the meaning of the cross of Christ is that capital punishment is a bad thing; and, as a Junior Higher, being taken upstairs to the adult Sunday School to be interrogated on the question of how our young people's Sunday School class could be made more "relevant." I remember seeing some faces reflecting surprise, some discomfort, and others paternal bemusement as I shared my very real desire to know who Martin Luther was and what he believed. Of course, it was only after leaving the Lutheran Church that I began to learn about Luther.

I can only reiterate what is becoming an important realization among evangelicals and fundamentalists, that we have much more in common with believing Catholics than we ever will with those professing Christians of whatever label who categorically reject the great creeds and the moral standards of the historic churches

they inhabit. I pray Nancy Yos' passionate plea will be heard by people of faith and courage in every denomination where unbelief and cowardice have so tragically obscured the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

(The Rev.) Wayne A. Wilson
Action Faith Bible Church
Palmdale, CA

Nancy Yos writes her *Cri de Coeur* for the paucity of religion taught in her Roman Catholic upbringing and doubts the future. She is both right and wrong. If it were necessary to read the fathers of the church, the saints, the great divines, the inspirational and spiritual contributors to the elaboration of Christendom, to sing the chants, psalms, glorias, hymns, and to inculcate our young with this knowledge to make them whole Christians we *would* be in sore trouble. It is not. That is not to say it is not efficacious, just that it is not necessary.

The necessities can be counted: to know and believe the creeds (Nicene, Apostles'), the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments and our Lord's summary of the Law; and to understand the necessity of Baptism and the Lord's Supper for salvation. These would suffice to equip a Christian for eternity.

Indeed, it could be argued that Christians through the ages have been so equipped with about this much baggage on board. Long before reading was general, souls were saved, instruction was given, and the faith passed on to succeeding generations.

The writing of the basic tenets of the faith upon one's heart requires minimal intellect. It is not wholly or exclusively in one's intellect that one engages God. (If it were, heaven would be only for smarties or heavy thinkers, and God would not be characterized as merciful!) . . .

Ms. Yos is correct that the educational material of Catholics, and of Protestants, too, is hopeless at conveying the faith. We drew a lot of maps as well as colored in Sunday School. At the end of all that drawing and coloring, my memories held only the words of the Lord's Prayer, the

creeds, the Ten Commandments. . . .

Charlotte Hawtin
Director of Research and Analysis
United Episcopal Church of North
America

Maybe I'm older than Nancy Yos (I'm 41) and therefore can remember the last days of the Baltimore Catechism. Things weren't as haphazard for me as they seem to have been for her in Catholic religious education. Yet I certainly can identify with her appeal, "teach me." Nowhere in my realm of experience with American Christianity is this being done well.

In my present church tradition, United Methodist, a pastor can write to our national magazine: "In my group of twelve young people, all regular church attenders, at our conference's fall camp for fifth through eighth graders, not one could tell us the reason Jesus died on the cross. One girl said they didn't study the Bible at her church. 'But,' she added, 'we do study recycling.' I felt so hurt for her, and angry." . . .

I used to think that Protestant churches had to fight an uphill battle to educate our children religiously because if they attended Sunday school at all, we had them for only 30 to 45 minutes of instructional time per week. But according to Ms. Yos, I needn't worry. Catholic education managed to inculcate very little in a lot of time. Neither tradition seems to have hit the highlights, for example, "why Jesus died on the cross."

Neither is secular public education hitting some very important highlights. Priorities in education (where I live, anyway) seem to be self-esteem, sexuality, and driver's training. Students have no clue in which century the American Civil War was fought. They cannot trace the passage of a bill through a legislature or a drop of blood through the human body. Should Ms. Yos be so surprised that neither religious nor secular education teaches us about such figures as Augustine, Francis of Assisi, Thomas Aquinas, Erasmus, Pascal? Both systems have bought into the modern disregard for the value of history: "If it didn't happen to me, it didn't happen." . . .

To end on a positive note, our United Methodist Church has graduated 100,000 persons in the last five years from *Disciple Bible Study*, a 34-week study of the entire Bible. In many cases, this amounts to remedial religious education. I'm sorry our members didn't receive adequate instruction the first time around. But we're attempting to turn the tide. In my local church, fifteen adults have completed the course. It's a beginning in the fight against biblical illiteracy.

Jeanne Devine Bonner
Wichita, KS

Just before reading Nancy Yos' article, I had read Rabbi Abraham Heschel's paper "Children and Youth" (presented to a White House conference on that subject in 1960). In it he claimed that the "problem with youth" is really a problem with adults—parents and others who themselves are not the sort of people that children can or ought to honor or revere. . . .

Recent studies of religious education by the Search Institute as well as research on confirmation ministry in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America have made it very clear that the most effective and rewarding Christian education and formation programs for youth occur in denominations and congregations where *adult* Christian education is a high priority. And the depth and breadth of this adult education is at least equal to that of the secular education that such adults have received.

It seemed to me in reading Yos' article that her implicit assumption that the church is the clergy and the institution reveals a great part of the problem in this area. As long as we do not see that the church is the people, clergy and lay alike, the whole body of Christ, there will be the tendency to leave Christian education to the professionals. Then we will blame the institution when education doesn't work rather than making sure that we as adults and parents are always involved in learning (in Heschel's sense: learning as a form of worship) and in seeing to it that such learning spills over into

the lives of the young.

Whatever the limits of self-education, Nancy Yos reveals its possibilities. May her kind multiply and may congregations welcome and assist such learning.

Marc Kolden
Luther Northwestern
Theological Seminary
St. Paul, MN

Nancy Yos' article is a remarkable and poignant account of the deplorable state of Christian education at the parish level. It is even more remarkable that Mrs. Yos has recognized that it is a *treasure* of which our children are deprived. Twenty-five years ago that treasure was termed "useless baggage" and "junk from the past" by those "progressives" who were about to throw it all overboard and set up a rival religion. And the pirates were not just Catholic; modernist Protestantism has edged out the Creed and Sacred Scripture and has attempted to stuff the gap with New Age puff. Led away from the worship of the Blessed Trinity, the once faithful bend despairing knee before nothing in particular. Pathetic. . . .

Our own six children, also raised in the religious ruins, have survived parochial school, CCD classes, etc. On a regular basis, we offered our own "third magisterium" classes in our home. Several generous and reliably orthodox speakers agreed to address a crowded living room of teenagers on various religious topics: church, sacraments, chastity, marriage and family, authority, work, school. It was remarkably successful! After the disaster of our older two sons' confirmation classes, we kept the younger ones out of CCD; they have been confirmed only after they left high school. All of the children have chosen Christian lives and faithful vocations. . . .

Mothers like Nancy Yos have the formation of young souls in their hands. They are establishing missionary outposts in their own homes. In a very real way mothers are like the scholars and monks of old, who must wear out their eyes in study and "face [modern] Vikings with their altars at their backs." The domestic

church—the family—seems rather isolated in its mission, but missionary outposts have always been remote in heathen lands. Remote, but not alone. There is yet another great treasure that, once recovered, can end that sense of aloneness and even of remoteness. The Communion of Saints was also pitched overboard, yet once it is recovered and recognized, it connects us with the angels and the saints of the past and with a host of unknown companions in the present. We are never abandoned, never in fact alone, *per saecula saeculorum*, not even at the end of time.

Ruth D. Lasseter
South Bend, IN

Many of the gaps in Ms. Yos' Catholic education are astounding—e.g., not knowing how to say the Rosary. To have completed twelve years of formal Catholic education and never have attended a Stations of the Cross is incredible. It's incredible that the schools she attended never required such attendance; it's unfortunate that the parents or guardians who sent her to Catholic schools apparently added nothing by way of example to her Catholic childhood. If St. Mary's School let me get away with missing a Stations of the Cross on a Friday in Lent, I would most likely have found myself accompanying my father to the service later that day. . . .

There is an implication in the essay that because a Catholic education fails so miserably in truly educating children about the history and traditions of Catholicism it is no different than a secular, public education. Catholic school children may graduate without knowing what the decades on a Rosary stand for, but I hope that Catholic schools continue to perform what I think may be their more basic mission—the teaching of civil behavior and basic human values along with English, math, and science. I honestly believe that this kind of education, even if it fails to illuminate what role Caiaphas played in the Passion narrative, "will help bring me to salvation, which is, after all, the point."

I bet Ms. Yos, notwithstanding her

profession of ignorance, will not permit her children to be on their own against the American Church's efforts to "smother Christian learning." As she wages war against the American Church to "save the Cross" I hope she will not become so obsessed with the Church's refusal to educate its people that she will ignore the Catholic Church's role in teaching the high moral values that I recall were an integral part of my Catholic education and my Catholic upbringing.

Sue A. Fugate
Oxford, PA

I was appalled to read of the lack of instruction Nancy Yos received in "formal Catholic education." . . .

Although I was certain of the depth of my education in this regard, I was doubtful, after reading the article, of that of my sixteen-year-old daughter's. So I went home and tested her. Let me compare my personal knowledge of things with that of my daughter's, who was born and raised in the American system of Catholic education after sixth grade. We both know the difference between the Gospels and the Epistles; the holy days of obligation . . . the Church calendar and the concomitant changes of color of the clergy's vestments; the understanding of Immaculate Conception; the Passion of Christ and the Lamb of God as the central part of the mass. And, most certainly, we both remember being told (I remember being hit over the head) to genuflect on both knees in the presence of our Lord during Holy Hour. It also made me feel good that my daughter's knowledge of the Bible was, perhaps, even better than mine. Her understanding of the Passion of Christ—possibly because of the influence of films such as *Jesus Christ Superstar*—was even fuller. She distinctly remembers readings during Lent on the words of Pontius Pilate, Herod, Caiaphas, Barabbas, and that of the people saying "Crucify Him, Crucify Him."

Finally, sometimes the teacher's seeds do not bear fruit, but those teachings are reinforced on Sundays, in the readings and sermons. I was

gratified that Ms. Yos overcame early obstacles and went on to fill in her gaps in religious education, and I am glad that, as in St. Francis' words, the author might have found in her life "where there was darkness, light." . . .

Ada Orlando
Miami, FL

Thank you for publishing Nancy Yos' article. . . . It should be required reading for those who staff diocesan and archdiocesan departments of religious education, as well as grade and high school principals, directors of religious education, and all teachers of religion courses, CCD, etc. Good for parents to read also. . . .

Therese Lawrence
San Anselmo, CA

Who's Ugly?

The editorial, "The Year that Conservatism Turned Ugly" (May), contains the argument that there is an inherent difference between the relevancy of the terms anti-Semitism, sexism, homophobia, and racism. The mind boggles!

This contention is based upon a logical convolutedness that grows out of what seems to be an unwillingness to believe the truths behind the words. Rather than simply admit this, the editorial states that sexism and homophobia are (1) terms of recent "ideological invention" that are (2) designed to discredit opponents in societal culture wars.

Do definitions take on meaning only with long usage? If sexism and homophobia have been misused by some, or, in some cases, have "ideological intent" not consonant with others' credos, why does not the old theological axiom, *abusus non tollit usum* (the abuse does not abolish the use), apply to them as well as it does to the terms racism and anti-Semitism? My personal experience with individuals who reject the use of these terms is that they do so because their personal shortcomings are reflected therein. People seem to hope that if offending labels are out of use, the discomfiting failures so identified aren't quite so real.

The attempt to assign narrow,

hamstrung definitions to these terms seems to belie an underlying "politically correct" position. Homophobia is more than a fear of homosexuals; it is a fear manifested in hate, violence, rejection, and the severing of the familial bond between parent/sibling and child. To quibble about, debase, and consequently dismiss terms based upon their periodic misuse rather than the truth that their application generally embodies is a conservative analogue to a liberal abuse of them. To be other than a white heterosexual male is to have all too often experienced real incidents of the racism, sexism, and homophobia (is "heterosexism" preferable?) of contemporary American society.

Jim McCrea
Piedmont, CA

I believe Hugh Kenner is right. "Anti-Semitism" has no stable meaning. Beyond Mr. Kenner's explanation of stable meaning, there are other questions of what is, and what is not, anti-Semitism.

If the alleged anti-Semitic statements made by Pat Buchanan are true, are they still anti-Semitic? If Pat otherwise believes them to be true, is Pat an anti-Semite?

It seems that a great deal depends on whether the statements are true and whether Pat believes them to be true. And therein hangs the explanation of why Pat does not apologize for making the statements. The truth *will* set us free.

W. J. Provance
Murrieta, CA

It was heartening to note that FIRST THINGS took issue with those who "recklessly equated reasonable criticism of Israel with anti-Semitism."

While conceding the major thesis that there are contemporary manifestations of anti-Semitism that are repulsive and in Christian and Catholic eyes sinful and deserving of condemnation, one is also obliged to note that there are sins of omission that must also be avoided. No matter how much one wants Israel to survive and prosper, and no matter how

much one admires Israel's spiritual heritage, one cannot permit those important concerns to fog the reality of the repugnance of the repression, suppression, and dispossession of Palestinians. The violations of their human rights, collectively and individually, cannot be glossed over if any sense of justice is to be maintained and honored.

The Intifada heading towards its fifth year revealed the immorality of the Israeli repression of the Palestinians. It is getting too late in the day to pretend that the nature of and the level of violence directed at the indigenous population in the last quarter of mandated Palestine is justified military or morally. The silence of too many religious Jews and Christians is reprehensible. What is more revolting is the racism inherent in the policies of dispossession and repression and in the silence accompanying it. . . .

Assuredly, manifestations of anti-Semitism need to be denounced today and so do demonstrations of racism towards the Palestinians. The imperative of the common command in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam to love your neighbor makes the demands of justice obligatory for all.

Richard J. Gallo
East Islip, NY

In Defense of the AAR

Paul V. Mankowski's ravings about the American Academy of Religion ("Academic Religion: Playground of the Vandals," May) should not be permitted to go unchallenged. As a longtime member of the Academy and participant in its philosophy of religion section, I want to comment on just two of his allegations: "the AAR's preoccupation with sexuality" and the absence of "sympathy for, or even awareness of, the struggles and achievements of Anglo-American analytic philosophy."

At the Kansas City meetings in November, about which Mankowski is writing, I attended sessions at which papers were presented, and discussions held, about Whitehead and process philosophy, Kant's philosophy of religion, Martin Buber, and

Hume. Human sexuality was not a topic of discussion at any of those sessions.

I myself read a paper in which I discussed, among other things, work by Brian Hebblewaite and Joseph Runzo. Unless Mankowski is operating with a completely idiosyncratic category scheme, these scholars fall into the Anglo-American school of analytic philosophy. Whether their work represents any great achievement is another matter. The point is that analytic work in philosophy of religion is known and discussed in the AAR. In the past few years, just to my knowledge, entire sessions of the philosophy of religion section have been devoted to that discussion. Christian philosophers like Nicholas Wolterstorff and Marilyn Adams were invited speakers. Plantinga's work has been discussed time and again.

The attractive thing about the AAR is that it brings together an amazingly diverse group of people interested in religion in many different ways and for many different reasons. If one wants to spend one's time at AAR meetings talking about human sexuality, it is possible to do so. One by no means has to do that. Readers can draw their own conclusions about how Mankowski chose to spend his time in Kansas City.

J. Wesley Robbins
Professor of Philosophy
Indiana University at South Bend

It is not particularly newsworthy that Paul V. Mankowski did not find God at the Kansas City meeting of the American Academy of Religion. To my knowledge, the Academy has never promised such a manifestation. If it did, I, and I suspect Father Mankowski also, would be justifiably suspicious of such claims.

Father Mankowski apparently knows that the inordinate preoccupation with sex that he saw in the AAR program is a sure attention getter. But, given a culture saturated with the subject, such preoccupation is hardly surprising.

Nor should one be surprised that, given the sad state of much that passes for theology these days, a fair amount of the analysis set forth

under that head at the Kansas City meeting lacked much sense of authority or awareness of tradition. But, not to worry Father Mankowski, he who marries the spirit of the times is soon to be widowed.

What is surprising and misleading in Father Mankowski's probing into the soul of the AAR is that he ignores so much. I too attended the famous or infamous Kansas City meeting. My first reaction on reading Father Mankowski's article was that we were not at the same meeting. True, I was involved with such subjects as "Freedom of Religion and Native American Traditions"—admittedly not the sexiest subject in the hall. But personal impressions aside, arguably the most significant development in the almost thirty years of the AAR's existence is that it has decisively transcended its Protestant (even liberal Protestant) orientation. It has become instead a society in which a broad array of topics from a variety of religious traditions are subjected to critical analysis. Annual meetings of the Academy now include attention to a range of traditions from African to Zoroastrian and including Buddhist, Hindu, Islamic, Jewish, and Native American as well as Christian traditions. As one might expect, some of the critical analyses are more scholarly than others. But the way to improve the standards is to enter the arena rather than cast stones from the bleachers.

Robert S. Michaelsen
Department of Religious Studies
University of California,
Santa Barbara

Paul V. Mankowski replies:

Of course I did not attend the American Academy of Religion's Annual Meeting expecting to find God, any more than I would go to a convention of the American Academy of Otolaryngology hoping to find ears. Yet one might expect of all learned societies that their professed norms of critical study be uniformly applied to their subjects. My disappointment with the AAR was not that it has broadened its horizons beyond Protestantism but that it seems unconscious of the exceptions it is

willing to make to its own policy of non-advocacy. If one is prepared to let feminist scholars ask (as did one AAR speaker), "Is it too late to go back to the Goddess?" one ought to let the Full Gosseller demand, "Are you washed in the Blood of the Lamb?" Far from reflecting "diversity" in this regard, the AAR struck me as monotonously indulgent of the former brand of partisanship and universally intolerant of the latter.

It was not my intention to suggest that the exotic interests declared by some AAR participants were to be imputed to all. In failing to make this clear I owe, and extend, an apology to Dr. Robbins. I am cheered to learn that the AAR's philosophical breadth is greater than that I encountered as a newcomer to the Annual Meeting. I would willingly be talked out of the suspicion that such instances of traditional scholarship represent a dwindling force within the organization. Readers desirous of making their own judgment may examine the AAR *Abstracts* (1991) printed by the Scholars Press, Atlanta, GA 30333.

What Bishops Don't Know

The article "What the Bishops Don't Know About Families" (May) was very properly followed by "Naming Good and Evil."

It has been my observation that the bishops of America are more and more looking to the laity for their direction in moral teaching. Our deacon gave a homily several weeks ago where he argued that the Pope had the responsibility of taking moral direction from his bishops, the bishops from their priests, and the priests from the laity.

This leads us not to expect anything but the bishops' statement on "putting children first." Most of those who have the ear of our bishops are feminists and naturally put their agenda first.

Frank H. Fischer
Arlington, TX

Hope for Canada?

Mark A. Noll's "The End of Canadian History?" (April) was as suc-

cinct in describing our history and the current malaise regarding our constitutional search as anything I've read.

With respect to government funding of religious-based schools, Canada has never been guided by the American church/state separation debate. While we have no religious "establishment," our laws have not sought to separate the church and state from working in a cooperative and interactive mode.

The current constitutional crisis has led to the possible inclusion of a preamble, which has a specific religious structure. This preamble, brought forward by MP John Reimer, has received all-party support. The difference between this preamble and the one to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms is that it will be "instructive" to the entire constitution and not just window dressing as is the Charter's preamble. Whether or not it will survive the final debate is yet to be seen. But it does show the possibility of a continuing Christian presence in the public life of the nation.

The preamble includes the following:

We affirm that our country
is founded upon principles that
acknowledge the supremacy of
God,
the dignity of each person,
the importance of family,
and the value of community.
We recognize that we remain free
only when freedom is founded on
respect for moral and spiritual
values,
and the rule of law

in the service of justice.

Brian C. Stiller
Executive Director
The Evangelical Fellowship
of Canada
Willowdale, Ontario

A Reconsideration Reconsidered

I wish to respond to the article "The Naked Public Square: A Metaphor Reconsidered" by Richard John Neuhaus (May).

Father Neuhaus refers to the great tyrants of this century (Hitler and Stalin) as being "virulently secular and most specifically at war with Judaism and Christianity." He indicates that the toll of the Inquisition was rather trivial when compared to that of the two infamous dictators, [but this is] certainly a function of means available rather than degree of bestiality.

In this connection, Hitler's view of the function of public schools is of interest, since it coincides rather nicely with that of the author. It was expressed in a speech made on April 26, 1933 in conjunction with the negotiations leading to the conclusion of the Nazi-Vatican Concordat. One could assume that it is duplicitous. To me it rings true. The master propagandist knew well how to inculcate ideas in all realms:

"Secular schools can never be tolerated because such schools have no religious instruction, and a general moral instruction without religious foundation is built on air; consequently, all character training and religion must be derived from

faith. . . . Faith transcends reason, and too much reasoning can destroy faith. . . . *We need a believing people*" (emphasis added).

He got what he needed. I say we need a *reasoning* people.

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Congratulations All Around

Congratulations are in order to FIRST THINGS for publishing, and to David Lotz for writing, his fine appreciation of the achievement of Jaroslav Pelikan, this century's greatest historian of doctrine. What was refreshing about the article was its refusal to content itself with being merely an awestruck paean to Pelikan's talents and achievement. Appreciation is hardly the same thing as fawning sycophancy, a sin perhaps we lesser mortals are tempted to when confronted with so astonishing a performance as Pelikan's five-volume history of Christian doctrine.

But Lotz is right. The enterprise is fraught with internal difficulties that demand engagement, and it is that willingness to take up that engagement that constitutes real appreciation. It was especially heartening to see this kind of work in FIRST THINGS, living proof that your journal's concern for the Great Tradition does not entail eschewing engagement with the modern world. On the contrary, the true test of the conservative temper will be how it meets that challenge. . . .

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Opinion

Why Pluralism Needs Monism

Peter J. Leithart

“Vatican II,” George Weigel writes in *Freedom and Its Discontents*, “posed a basic challenge to the many monisms, religious and secular, ancient and modern, that continue to beset human life and the cause of human freedom.”

The Council mounted this challenge to the monistic cast of mind, a term that Weigel uses interchangeably with “totalitarian,” through a recovery and adaptation of the pluralistic principle articulated by Pope Gelasius I to Anastasius in 494 A.D.: “Two there are, august emperor, by which this world is ruled on title of original and sovereign right—the consecrated authority of the priesthood and the royal power.” In the past, monism was expressed in the altar-throne union that was held up as the Roman Catholic ideal into the nineteenth century. Today, Weigel argues that the same impulse fuels Marxist totalitarianism and the sacralization of politics of “theologies of liberation.” Similarly, Richard John Neuhaus has criticized evangelicals of the left and the right for their “monism.”

According to John Courtney Murray, to whom both Weigel and Neuhaus are indebted, monism posits that sovereignty is indivisible and therefore must be lodged in a single institution or person with overarching and absolute authority. This “monistic drive” thus seeks “a oneness of society, law, and authority.” Monism has taken various guises: from the royal absolutism of the early modern period to the Jacobin insistence on the sovereignty of the people to the virtual divinization of the Party in Marxist-Leninist states.

Rejection of social and political monism has as its corollary an affirmation of institutional pluralism. According to this view, the state’s jurisdiction is limited, society and state are separate, and the various institutions—family, church, and state—are independent of one another. These principles have a notable ancestry within the Calvinist tradition with which I identify: from the concept of sphere sovereignty developed by Dutch theologian and statesman Abraham Kuyper, to the *Politics* of the sixteenth-century German Calvinist Althusius, all the way back to Calvin himself, who spent the greater part of his career struggling for the freedom of the Church in a city where civil rulers dictated ecclesiastical policy. Insofar as monism means the

absorption of all institutions by the State (or Church), Calvinism has forcefully repudiated it.

At the same time, Calvinists have insisted that a Christian account of man and society must make what many will view as “totalitarian” and “monistic” claims. Unqualified critiques of monism fail to take account of important theological truths. Surely, for example, no Christian would take a critique of “monism” as far as Richard Rorty, who has argued that anyone who subordinates all activities to one dominant end—such as, for example, doing one’s all *ad maiorem gloriam Dei*—is simply mad. (So much not only for Calvin and Ignatius Loyola, but for Paul as well.)

Moreover, the New Testament demands a confession of the great “monistic” fact of the new age of the kingdom—the fact that absolute sovereignty belongs indivisibly to Christ, the Lord. Everywhere in the New Testament this chord is sounded. Before His ascension, Jesus claimed that “all authority is given to Me in heaven and on earth” (Matthew 28:19). The Father raised Jesus and “put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as Head of all things to the Church” (Ephesians 1:22). In its exhortations to kings and judges, the messianic Psalm 2 draws a specifically political message from the enthronement of the Son, an application found as well in John’s vision of Christ as the King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelation 19:15-16). The confession that Christ is Lord is the “monistic” confession that there is only One Lord. To confess Christ as Lord is to confess that ultimate sovereignty is indeed indivisible. To be a Christian is to confess the cosmic *mon-archy* of Christ.

Such a “monistic” and “totalitarian” affirmation does not, however, entail an abandonment of institutional pluralism but instead underwrites it. Because Christ alone is Lord of all, all human authority is derived and limited; because Christ alone is Lord, it is idolatry for the Party to claim absolute Lordship. Indeed, it seems to me that the monistic affirmation of Christ’s Lordship is the best defense of the pluralism of the social order. Murray noted that the “monistic tendency has been visible in practically all the states that have paraded across the stage of history.” Even democratic systems are not immune: Murray castigated the “totalitarianizing tendency inherent in the contemporary idolatry of the democratic process,” warned against the monism of political technique that settles all issues by majority vote, and concluded that democratic monism is ultimately a monism of power, which reformulates the Gelasian principle to read, “One there is whereby this world is ruled—the power in the people, expressing itself in the preference of a majority; and beyond or beside or above this power there is no other.”

The pervasiveness of social monism in history

and its appearance in modern democratic systems suggests that it is a drive deeply rooted in man. This in turn suggests the possibility that at some level some sort of monism is inescapable, and that if the monism of Christ is rejected, the monism of the State—or of the Majority or of the Party, which amounts to the same thing—is the most readily available alternative.

Christians of all people should have no difficulty with an account of human society that recognizes both monistic and pluralistic dimensions or with the double confession that “there are two” and that “there is One.” Christians, after all, worship a God who is Three and One, a God who formed man, and therefore human society, in His own image.

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Evangelicals and Economic Development

Amy L. Sherman

Earlier this year I was in charge of “debriefing” a small group of evangelical college students who had spent their spring break working with various agencies serving the homeless in inner-city Washington. Though they all had their own thoughts about what caused the poverty they had witnessed, everyone strongly agreed that the most effective strategy for relieving it was one centered on evangelism. One man who’d been working with the homeless for years told the students he could tell simply by a person’s eyes whether he or she was going to “make it.” The ones who have hope in their eyes do, he continued, and bringing them that hope required addressing their spiritual as well as physical needs.

These insights, grasped by the students in less than a week, are overwhelmingly affirmed by American evangelicals, according to a recently released survey on Christian relief and development ministry. The fundamental issue the survey sought to address was this: If a person or organization is brought into the fight against poverty and suffering by a mandate drawn from Christian belief and teaching, in what ways should the actions of that person, or the policies of that organization, reflect

a Christian point of view? In other words, what if anything should be “distinctive” about Christian relief and development? Eighty-seven percent polled argued that Christian agencies should consider “spreading the gospel and converting people to the Christian faith” the ultimate goal of their development efforts.

The survey, conducted for the *Stewardship Journal* by the Center for Survey Research at the University of Virginia, clearly indicated that evangelicals expect Christian agencies to act differently from their secular counterparts. The vast majority of those surveyed (the total number was 1,051) believe that Christian agencies should employ workers who profess a personal faith in Jesus Christ and that they should view evangelism as integral to their efforts.

The survey also revealed that, contrary to the unattractive portrait of evangelicals and fundamentalists painted by American elites, these groups are among the most socially concerned and most generous segments of the American population. Asked to rate the relative importance of a variety of contemporary social issues, the respondents chose “helping the poor in America” as their number one concern. As was to be expected, they also voiced strong concerns about the issues of abortion and pornography, but rated “helping the poor around the world” of almost equal significance. The mean rating for this issue was 8.4 on a scale of 10; mean ratings for abortion and pornography were 8.8 and 8.6 respectively.

More than this, evangelicals put their money where their mouths are. Seventy-seven percent of the survey respondents said they give 10 percent or more of their income to Christian and charitable enterprises, which is far above the national norm. (According to a 1980 Gallup poll, only 1.6 percent of non-Christians gave 10 percent or more of their income to charitable causes.) Over 60 percent of the sample said their families gave in the past year to Christian relief and development ministries, and most of those contributions were substantial: \$100 or more. A fifth gave \$500 or more to such efforts overseas.

Some of the survey’s findings will disappoint those Christians sympathetic to the arguments of liberation theology about the causes of Third World underdevelopment. Survey respondents were asked to choose one of three possible explanations for why the poor countries are poor: (1) “because they have been exploited by the richer countries”; (2) “because their governments are corrupt”; and (3) “because their people have beliefs about work and other matters that do not agree with biblical teaching.” Only 13 percent choose the first statement. Most popular was statement number two. In a follow-up question, participants were asked what

they thought was the most important thing poor countries needed to fight poverty. The majority chose the response: “changes in their own political and economic structures.” Clearly most evangelicals pin the blame for underdevelopment on “internal” causes rather than “external” hostile or unjust forces in the international economic system.

Nonetheless, the evangelicals did not dismiss the notion that an individual’s religious and cultural beliefs have an effect on his prospects for economic betterment. A quarter of the respondents believe that holding non-biblical attitudes can contribute to poverty, and 52 percent argued that becoming a Christian would help someone lift himself out of poverty. They explained this by saying that physical blessings come to those who obey biblical principles about work and stewardship of resources. Clearly, evangelicals do not see evangelism as an “add-on” to social ministry; they consider Christianity itself as a vital part of the solution to poverty. As the survey report put it:

The implication is that, while local economic and political conditions must be addressed in any realistic fight against poverty, the religious component of Christian relief and development efforts will make these efforts more effective in the long run than their secular counterparts.

The vast majority of survey participants can be labeled “traditional” in their Christian beliefs as measured by their responses to questions about the Bible (“the Bible is the unerring word of God”); the nature of Jesus Christ (“fully God and fully man”); and access to Heaven (“the only hope for Heaven is through personal faith in Jesus Christ”). Nonetheless, the survey researchers did attempt to differentiate the sample into “more” and “less” traditional believers by considering those who chose alternative positions to the conservative responses listed above as “less” traditional. “Less traditional” respondents were far more likely to have identified themselves with the “mainline” rather than “evangelical” denominations. And they tended to place less emphasis than their “more traditional” counterparts on the need for “distinctiveness” in Christian relief and development ministry. For example, 90 percent who said the label “evangelical” described them “very well” agreed with the statement that Christian development agencies should employ only workers who had made a personal profession of faith in Jesus Christ. Among those who said the label “evangelical” did not describe them, only 70 percent agreed with the statement. Ninety-five percent of those with the most traditional beliefs agreed that spreading the gospel and converting people should be the ultimate goal of development work, compared to 83 percent of those with less

traditional beliefs. Those with less traditional beliefs were also more likely than the traditionalists to feel that preaching or evangelizing by relief workers engaged in helping people suffering from some disaster, such as an earthquake or famine, was “insensitive” or inappropriate.

The other characteristic associated with a downplaying of Christian distinctiveness in development work (in addition to holding “less traditional” theological beliefs) was exposure to secular media. Interviewers asked respondents where they learned about problems of Third World development. Those with higher levels of exposure to secular newspapers, magazines, and television scored significantly lower on the “Christian distinctiveness index” compiled by the researchers. In contrast, those who relied primarily on their church’s missionaries and Christian magazines and television for their information scored high on the index. The researchers conclude: “The more respondents are exposed to secular media and rate them highly as information sources, the less they see the who, what, where, when, how, and why of Christian aid as being distinctive.”

Nevertheless, most survey participants clearly expect Christian agencies in the field to behave differently from secular organizations such as the Peace Corps or the Red Cross. They embrace what one of the students I met with called a “holistic” approach: “not just throwing sandwiches down to the people, but talking to them about Christianity—which is what really can change their life.” Donors to overseas development efforts want to see poor people’s physical *and* spiritual needs ministered to. We can hope that the survey will serve as a wake-up call to Christian relief and development organizations that are tempted to de-emphasize the gospel.

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The Pope, the Emperor, and the First Amendment

Augustine Thompson

Every year during the winter quarter my year-long course in the history of Christianity reaches the eleventh-century Gregorian Reform and the Investiture Conflict.

Every year my students struggle to make sense of the positions of Emperor Henry IV and Pope Gregory VII. With great effort some of them recognize that, translated into contemporary terms, Henry's position would imply state control of religion, at least in its externals and organization. A smaller number recognize that Gregory's intent was to free ecclesiastical administration from royal control, and thus might be taken, again in contemporary terms, as a fight for the separation of church and state. Most students fall back on the easy, and satisfying, explanation that the conflict was merely a "power struggle" between aggressive autocrats, men who merely clothed their lust for power in religious language. For most of my unchurched Protestant students at the University of Oregon, Pope Gregory is the more offensive figure; they side with Henry. In short, the popular feeling is against freedom of religion, or at least of eleventh-century religion, from state control.

This outcome always gives me pause. I could chalk it up to Oregon's old tradition of anti-Catholicism. This is, after all, the state where 1920s Klan-inspired laws originally directed against Catholic teaching sisters are still on the books and were recently used to fire a high school teacher who wore religious garb in class (she was a Sikh). But I suspect that the preponderance of students in colleges and universities elsewhere would also favor the emperor's control of religion against its papally sponsored independence. Why? As I reflect on this, I am more and more convinced that students reject Gregory's separation of church and state, certainly not because they believe in a state-run church, but because they no longer believe that there should or can be a "church" that could be freed from state control.

When the pope and emperor clashed back in 1075, both of them knew what a church was. It was a divinely ordained reality, composed of the body of Christians, with God-given authority to order the faith and practice of its members. The medieval question was simple: where does the emperor fit into the picture? Is he, as emperor, somehow the

church's director, the orderer of ecclesiastical administration? Or is he merely a Christian, subject to ecclesiastical, that is clerical, authority in matters of belief, practice, and church administration? One could resolve the problem by rejecting the very idea of legitimate secular authority altogether. Gregory VII, when justifying his policy to Bishop Hermann of Metz, came very close to denying all legitimacy to temporal government. But his later followers shied away from such a radical position. Even in the Middle Ages those who would abolish secular governments were very rare indeed. None of my students has ever questioned the legitimacy of civil government. Or, if some have, they have not done so in my presence.

Now religious government is a wholly different matter. For the vast majority, Christian or not, the individual is the highest religious authority. The individual alone has the right to determine his or her religious affiliation. This position is hardly surprising or shocking. Beyond this view, however, my students would probably deny that any member of their chosen denomination, or that denomination as a whole, had any right to determine belief or morals for its members. True, it is assumed that clergy or "theologians" have a kind of religious authority, but this is the same kind of authority that I have as a professor. I speak with authority because I happen to know more about the subject than the students do. At least in the case of those belonging to evangelical bodies, their ministers can give authoritative pronouncements on belief because they are assumed to have a better knowledge of the Bible.

Back in the 1140s the Canonist Gratian already understood there were two kinds of religious authority. One, based on knowledge, gave authority to explain what was already determined. The other, based on divinely appointed office, gave the right to determine new cases. The second is absolutely essential for the existence of a church as the medievals understood it. This is a very useful distinction, and an aside seems in order here to clarify what it means today.

When contemporary Catholic theologians, for example, want to claim for themselves a *magisterium* based on expertise along side of the *magisterium* of office granted to the pope and bishops, they are in today's circumstances attempting a clever sleight of hand. Since, as I suggest, Americans generally reject the very idea of religious authority founded on office, these theologians are left as the sole actual authority in the American Catholic Church. The press, as the Charles Curran case has recently shown, willingly helps the theologians promote this project. Unfortunately for this new *magisterium* of expertise, Americans are also very, very skeptical of learning when it comes to religious

matters. "Gimme that ol' time religion, / It's good enough for me. . . ."

So, although in practice my students' local ministers often exercise enormous authority in defining dogma for their local congregations, this authority of expertise is based on the benefit of the doubt. The membership assumes that ministers "know" more than the average Christian, and so they have a right to exercise authority. This kind of authority can, in fact, make the minister more powerful than the pope—so long as he or she still has the benefit of the doubt. In short, religious authority can be claimed by anyone who has the interest, time, or ability to become an "expert," or to cultivate the appearance thereof. This does not mean very much in practice. Even after much study, a given interpretation of the Bible, no matter how learned, or perhaps because it is learned, carries little weight for those who disagree with it.

Now the fact that no individual can possess genuine religious authority, that is, the power to determine norms of belief and practice for others, does not prevent a religious body as a whole from claiming such power. The autonomous Christian believers who make up the body could consent to the establishment of real norms and sanctions. But this is hardly a real possibility in contemporary society. Liberal Christian bodies are loath to impose any norms whatsoever on their members. Conservative bodies are usually so homogeneous in attitude that their norms or sanctions would act as a discipline only to those individuals who would not join such bodies anyway. When a body—for example, the Mormons (relatively frequently) or the American Catholic Church (rarely)—actually disciplines a member, it is held up to general ridicule and scorn. When, on rare occasions, a religious leader claims a God-given right to determine religious questions by virtue of office alone, we label him the leader of a cult. The old nativist canard revives: the pope is the leader of a cult.

What makes Gregory VII repellent to my students is his claim to possess the authority to define beliefs and norms and the power to discipline and punish delinquents. He violates their deeply held conviction that the individual is the only legitimate authority in religious matters. Henry is a hero, not because he claimed religious authority himself, but because he resisted another's claim to it. For my students, there is one and only one "authority" above the individual: the state. It alone has the power to determine societal norms and to morally or physically coerce its citizens.

Since the state alone can establish norms, popular ethics follows its laws. When abortion was illegal, the majority felt it wrong; now that it is legal, the majority will feel it acceptable. Abortion rights activists intuitively know this, which explains the

current hysterics over a possible reversal of *Roe v. Wade*. This reversal would almost certainly bring little real change in the accessibility of abortion since most people live in or near states where abortion on demand will remain legal. It would, however, send a message calling the existence of a "right to abortion" into question.

Yes, in America certainly, one has the right to object to the state's actions. But the denial of supra-individual religious norms puts an odd spin on our political discourse. If an objection to state policy suggests even the remotest suspicion of inspiration by religious or moral "authority," it is illegitimate. Note the rebuke hurled, with frequency, against the anti-abortion movement that its motivation is "religious." Why should religious (as opposed to financial, sociological, psychological, scientific, or aesthetic) motivations render a political position illegitimate *ipso facto*? The reason is simple: since the individual is the only religious authority, he or she can only apply religious norms to one person, him- or herself. Any suggestion that religious norms might apply to others is a tyranny, or worse, a psychological pathology. Thomas Hobbes was right; the state alone has power over individual lives, fortunes, and honor. There can be no "separation of church and state" because there is no church, only individuals. When speaking of religion, American society recognizes only the "separation of believer and state."

Once this is recognized, the peculiar manner in which American society debates church-state issues becomes remarkably logical. The rhetoric of these debates recalls the church-state conflict of Gregory and Henry, but the similarity is deceptive. I would suggest that the contemporary rhetoric of "separation" really masks two other projects, neither of which involves a church at all. One forwards the abolition of supra-personal religious authority; it uses the language of privacy. The other enshrines the individual as the supreme arbiter in religion; it uses the language of freedom of expression. Both of these projects concern individual liberties, not the separation of church and state.

How does the current debate on church and state localize religious authority in the individual? The First Amendment, when it protects "the free exercise" of religion, does not function as a guarantee of liberty to a church or churches; rather it functions as a gloss on the guarantee of freedom of speech, or as we now suitably say, "expression." (Mary Ann Glendon made a similar point in her recent article "Religion and the Court" in the March 1992 issue of *FIRST THINGS*.) Students want to use a classroom for prayer, a group wants to put a nativity scene or menorah in a public park, somebody wants to distribute Bibles, or restore or abolish prayers in the schools. Not a single one of these

involves any religious entity above the individual, even when they sometimes concern a collection of individuals. These cases are really about freedom of speech or expression. Take the group of students praying after school or during recess. Courts have generally permitted this. The logic is simple: people, it is generally agreed, have a right to express themselves however they wish, so long as it does not hurt others (like crying "fire" in a crowded theater) or cost other people money (like state funding of politically motivated art).

The nativity/menorah debate is not so simple. It hurts no one and (let us assume) it costs others nothing, since no tax money is used for it. One group of individuals is exercising freedom of expression, but another has the feeling that this expression has rendered a religious observance or symbol somehow normative for others because it appears on public property. The objectors are right: you see the religious object in the park whether you want to or not. That it is in a *public* park implies to the viewer that it is somehow normative for someone besides the individual who installed it. The current charade (pretend the display is not religious by including an image of Santa Claus) does not work. We all know who the Baby Jesus is. And I, for one, find the apparent public sponsorship of the consumerism implicit in Santa Claus more offensive than the display of religious symbols.

The nativity-scene debates naturally invoke the First Amendment guarantee that the state will make no establishment of religion. Taken literally, this clause outlaws the establishment of a "state-church" (be it Christian or otherwise), but in practice the issues debated have little or nothing to do with establishment and much to do with privacy.

Take the recent debates over whether practitioners of Amerindian religions can use an illegal drug, peyote, or whether certain immigrants from the Caribbean, the Rastafarians, can smoke marijuana. This seldom shapes up as a church-state issue. Rather the question is whether the state should enforce its laws against the use of certain drugs on those who want to use them in their personal lives, that is, in religious rituals. Like most other debates about the enforcement or nonenforcement of drug laws, the debates usually come back to whether private activities of individual citizens that harm no other citizens should be subject to public sanctions. In that sense, the debate starts to look much like one over privacy as well as freedom of expression.

Privacy, however, may serve as a code word for delegitimizing any proposal founded on religious "authority." A good example was the 1965 Supreme Court decision in *Griswold v. Connecticut*, where the court threw out that state's law against contraceptives. This law looked suspiciously like an imposition of "religious" norms, thus it was illegitimate. Religious norms can only be imposed by an individual on him- or herself, otherwise the "privacy" of others is violated. The same logic holds in much of the popular argumentation for *Griswold's* offspring, *Roe v. Wade*. We should remember that the word "privacy" does not appear in the First Amendment provision prohibiting "establishment of religion," nor anywhere else in the Constitution, for that matter. But the court got the common perception of what "religious freedom" means just about right.

The interconnectedness between privacy and the right of expression comes out beautifully in the often-proposed compromise on school prayer to which I alluded earlier, "the moment of silence." The "*moment of silence*" allows the religiously inclined to express themselves; the "*moment of silence*" protects the privacy (that is, the religious self-determination) of those who are not so inclined. The individualistic right to impose religious norms on oneself and the prohibition of even implying that these hold for others are in precarious balance here. But notice: church-state relations have nothing to do with any of this.

It is no wonder that my students have trouble understanding the Investiture Conflict. Henry was dead set against that separation of church and state that we all purport to defend. But Gregory was obviously opposed to the rights of freedom of expression and privacy that for Americans trump every other norm. Understood in those terms, my students' choice is the only one possible. In our world there is no supra-personal church authority to be subordinated to the state anyway. Thus, we can safely side with Henry. Pope Gregory's alternative is too dangerous, as it might imply the existence of a church separate from the state. And such a free and separate church might actually be able to tell me how to think and act.

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Christianity in the Mirror of Jewish Thought

Alan L. Mittleman

What do modern Jewish thinkers make of Christianity?

Is Christianity in their eyes still the oppressive, pervasive presence that medieval Jews experienced as Christendom? Is Christianity held to be that which fills the hearts of Gentiles with implacable contempt for Jews? Or is it a chastened, limited, historical and cultural presence, knocked down to size by secular modernity, infected by modernity and therefore ambivalent in its attitude toward Jews? In other words, is Christianity a once-powerful, now largely superseded force or is it a still-powerful, enduring factor in our history? In yet other words, is there a road—as some have suggested—from Golgotha to Auschwitz, such that a still-powerful Christianity bears a heavy responsibility for the Holocaust? Or was Christianity too a victim of a movement more pagan than Christian?

Are Christians and Jews, as men and women of faith, fellow travelers and fellow strangers in the strange new world of faithless modernity? Does modernity impose new conditions on the ancient Christian-Jewish relationship, so that now they find themselves with common goals or common enemies? Or are Christians, even under the conditions of modernity, still the masters of this common Western house and Jews still the invited guests?

Immediately we can see that any satisfactory answer to the question, “What do modern Jewish thinkers make of Christianity?” involves the answer to another related, yet fundamental matter, “What

do modern Jewish thinkers make of modernity?” The theological question of how Judaism ought to relate to Christianity and the social-moral question of how Jews ought to relate to Christians both rest on a prior Jewish judgment about the character of the age, about the nature of the historical juncture that Jew and Christian share. In speaking of Christianity, then, the Jew must reckon with the character of the moment in which the historical trajectories of Judaism and Christianity cross.

The nature of the ground is at least as important, if not more important, than the nature of the figure. The backdrop of the world in which Jews encounter Christians, and Judaism encounters Christianity, is at least as important as the particular features of Christianity itself. For a Jew, I am suggesting, it is at least as important to ask, “What does it mean to believe today?” and “What difference do non-Jewish believers make in a world like ours?” as it is to ask, “What do Christians believe?” I want to echo here David Novak’s view that any judgment a Jew makes about Christianity involves a judgment about the world Jews and Christians now inhabit, particularly with regard to the status of belief and belief-based ethics in that world. Such a judgment, of course, reveals something of the one who makes it.

There are at least two different scenarios in modern Jewish thought with regard to the status of Christianity, relative to the character of the modern world.

In the first scenario, our shared world is essentially and durably secular, neither Jewish nor Christian. A de-religionized world has developed

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in Western history, removing Christianity from its medieval throne. Extra- or meta-religious standards exist against which Judaism can judge Christianity or—to be honest—Judaism and Christianity can both be judged. The Jewish observer acquiesces in this now several-centuries-old process, greeting the predominance of the secular with tacit or prophetic approval. Against the emergence of the secular, revealed religions like Christianity and Judaism stand on equal legal, cultural, and, in a sense, epistemological ground. That is to say, modernity renders all revealed religions equally suspect from a philosophical point of view simply because the nonreligious intellectual terrain from which religion is viewed and judged dominates the intellectual field.

Significantly, however, for many modern Jews Judaism sustains itself within the perspective of modern secularism better than Christianity. Christianity seems less in accord with the anti-supernatural, scientific character of modern reason. Judaism seems strangely empowered by modernity—in fact, is thought to be the ideal religion of modernity. This theme was particularly pronounced among American Reform thinkers of the past century. They viewed Reform Judaism as uniquely in accord with American modernity, while Christianity, by contrast, actually impeded the fulfillment of American destiny by tying America to Old World anti-democratic traditions and dogmas. In Europe, leading German Jewish thinkers, such as Moses Mendelssohn, Hermann Cohen, and Leo Baeck exemplify this view. The emerging or emplaced character of modernity militates against Christianity and favors Judaism, often for civic or political-theological reasons.

In the second scenario, our shared world, despite its manifestly secular appearance, remains beneath the surface powerfully religious. Modernity is the story not of religion lost, but of religion transformed. The messianic longings of Christian or Jew became in the fearsome alchemy of history the realizable political utopias of Communists and fascists; the Jewish insistence on linking thought and action became the praxis of revolutionaries like Marx; the Christian mission to the nations became the manifest destiny of sundry Western nation states. Once Russians went to the monasteries of Zagorsk or Kiev to adore the relics of sainted monks. In modern times—at least until recently—they went to Red Square to adore the relics of Vladimir Illych Lenin. The symbols change, but the ineluctable human religiosity at the core remains. The constitutive human hunger for ultimacy of purpose, transcendent confirmation of values, solace in the face of death, remains. If the human experience is essentially a religious one, then secular modernity is less a religion-free zone than a religion of its own, a religion of radical this-worldliness. Secular

modernity, with its careful effort to bracket ultimate issues of life's meaning and goal out of civil life, acquires the status of a surrogate religion and becomes a source of profound disquietude for those thinkers who have pierced its banal surface and discovered its mythic core.

But the repressed returns. As human beings cannot live indefinitely in so metaphysically depleted a universe, the search for authentic religious expression becomes urgent. Secular modernity must be transcended. For those Jews who find the character of modernity no less religion-intensive than its predecessors, Christianity becomes an important datum. The Jew might find in its enduring reality a significance for the human future no less crucial than that of Judaism. Franz Rosenzweig and Martin Buber exemplify this subversive perspective respecting modernity. Their estimation of Christianity is consequently more positive than Mendelssohn's, Cohen's, or Baeck's.

The first scenario—acquiescence in the predominance of the secular sphere and consideration of Christianity against a durable modern backdrop—finds its most paradigmatic and seminal expression in the thought of Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786). Mendelssohn, in a sense the first “modern Jew,” moved to Berlin, the Prussian capital, as a young man, and soon acquired an international reputation as a philosopher of the German Enlightenment. The phenomenon was altogether unprecedented. Not since medieval times had a Jewish intellectual commanded the attention and respect of the Gentile world. Known as the “Jewish Socrates,” Mendelssohn wrote on aesthetics and ethics. His friendship with the writer Lessing inspired the drama *Nathan the Wise*, a classic brief for broad-mindedness in matters of religion.

Owing to his extraordinary achievements in the field of philosophy, the Royal Prussian Academy nominated Mendelssohn for membership, an indication of the high level of acceptance he had achieved among like-minded intelligentsia. A new, a modern world, it seemed, was aborning. The nomination, however, had to be approved by the King, Frederick II. Frederick, an enlightened despot whose enlightenment failed him when it came to Jews, had nominated Catherine the Great, Czarina of Russia, and did not want to insult her by inviting her to belong to the same academy as a Jew. Frederick vetoed Mendelssohn's membership. Mendelssohn reportedly said to his sponsors, “Sirs, it is better to be nominated by you and turned down by the king, than to be nominated by the king and turned down by you.”

This disappointment was not the last Mendelssohn would experience. But insofar as he belonged to an elite international circle of intellectuals, a world in which reason, culture, and refined sen-

sibility—rather than tradition and tribalism—prevailed, he sublimated his disappointments and took this emerging, neutral *Gelehrter republik* (Republic of the Learned) as the coming shape of the modernizing world. Mendelssohn dedicated his mature years to enabling his fellow Jews to enter it as well. He believed that the acceptance that he found would be extended to other Jews if only they could learn German and think and act like moderns.

Unlike that famous or infamous Jewish philosopher of the previous century, Baruch Spinoza, Mendelssohn did not abandon his Judaism. He remained a traditional Jew all his life. Yet his philosophy made no place for his Judaism and he appeared an anomaly to his public. All of this changed in 1769 when a Swiss theologian, Johann Casper Lavater, publicly challenged Mendelssohn, in the Preface of an apologetic work on Christianity, to either refute the truth of Christianity or convert to it. Mendelssohn tried strenuously to avoid entering into public debate on so delicate an issue, but other challenges followed. The challenges forced him to articulate, not only a view of Christianity, but a philosophy of Judaism. His understanding of both religions and of their interrelationship was worked out against the background of the neutral, secular sphere which, although threatened by painful intrusions, remained normative and ideal for him.

Mendelssohn grants that Jesus was a moral teacher at home in the universe of Judaism, but the Christian transformation of Jesus into a messiah and savior goes beyond the evidence. Indeed, Christianity as a whole takes a leap which a Jew—or a modern man—really ought not to make: its stress on the miraculous and its emphasis on dogmatic formulations of faith offend against reason. While miracles and dogmas are intelligible to faithful insiders, they can hardly persuade rational outsiders. And the neutral, rational outside stance has now become normative.

Mendelssohn's endorsement of independent, critical reason is not a fully secular stance. As a religious *Aufklaerer*, Mendelssohn is convinced that reason is God-given. God has given all human beings sufficient guidance to achieve their eternal happiness through the light of inherent reason. Christianity's burdensome dogmas and fantastic miracles obscure, rather than refine, that inner, saving light. Mendelssohn furthermore believes that Judaism neither has nor requires such dogmas. Judaism is a rational religion that does not rely on a revelation that runs counter to common sense. God revealed to Moses and Israel a law, not a set of beliefs. Nothing in the law contradicts the light of reason. This is not true of Christianity, however. Thus, Mendelssohn implies, Judaism is superior to Christianity and more fit for the modern spirit.

Sensing, however, that this emerging modern spirit might threaten both religions, Mendelssohn urges his Christian interlocutors not to challenge Jews with charges of supposed contradictions in Judaism, but to work together with them to nullify the threat. Were our religions properly interpreted in an Enlightenment manner, no discrepancies between Scripture and Reason could exist.

He grounded the future relationship of Jews and Christians, therefore, in a common dedication to a meta-religious truth to which all good men could give assent. Although not naive about the reality of anti-Semitism, which he had personally experienced, or the obstacles to Jewish Emancipation and acculturation, he believed that the future belonged to a neutral, secular sphere constituted by enlightened values acceptable to all. The blueprint for that polity—Mendelssohn's brief for religious liberty—is called, not accidentally, *Jerusalem*. To live in a properly enlightened Berlin would be as if to live in Jerusalem. A stronger validation of secular modernity from within committed Judaism can hardly be found.

Hermann Cohen (1842-1918) resembled his illustrious predecessor, Mendelssohn, in many ways. Cohen was a world-renowned philosopher, a founder of the influential neo-Kantian school, and a professor at Marburg University. Cohen achieved high honors as a Jew at a time when German universities were the most prestigious in the world and when modern, racial anti-Semitism was on the rise. Like Mendelssohn, he was nurtured in the rich atmosphere of traditional Judaism, training in his youth for the rabbinate. Similarly, his philosophical concerns led him to neglect Judaism—in Cohen's case, both intellectually and behaviorally—until later in his life. After retiring from Marburg, Cohen spent his last years developing a powerful philosophy of Judaism while lecturing at the Institute for Jewish Studies in Berlin.

The Jewish philosophy of Cohen's last phase differs from his systematic neo-Kantian work at Marburg. Originally, Cohen believed in the autonomy and creativity of human reason. Unlike Mendelssohn, Cohen did not understand reason to be God-given. Reason is like a god unto itself. Reason creates the human world, shaping raw scraps of sensory reality into a habitable, intelligible cosmos. Ethics is the final category for man, the highest expression of what it is to be human. Religion is a mere tutor to ethics, a myth-making pedagogue for those who are not yet capable of abstract, rational thought. God is at best an idea, a hypothesis that gives us confidence that the world in which we strive to be ethical will last long enough for our ethics to bear fruit. In Cohen's early phase, human beings must strive to bring about the triumph of ethics. That triumph ultimately is synonymous with a

united humanity, living in justice. Cohen believed that the German nation was at the cutting edge of this historic movement and that at its conclusion, Judaism and Christianity—which were both essentially concerned with this task anyway—would merge into a single, supportive, civic faith.

Cohen's Marburg system cannot be considered Jewish thought. It is paradigmatically modern and secular. In his later work, however, he radically reverses his position. Yet in some ways he never overcomes the distinctively modern, secular judgments of Marburg.

Cohen's Jewish thought is far more theocentric than his earlier systematic work. He denies autonomy to reason and roots the human world in God. The Marburg system culminates in ethics; the Berlin system culminates in God, in religion, in Judaism. Cohen holds on to his messianic expectation of an achievable kingdom of justice, but he comes to understand the messianic task in terms of a partnership between a living God and his human creatures, rather than as a work of human practice alone. As the messianic role of Judaism in history became increasingly clear for him, Cohen came to see Christianity as an imperfect contributor, if not an impediment, to the messianic process.

Cohen was especially concerned with specifying the nature of the relationship between man and God, and with affirming the unity of humanity. He faulted Christianity on both counts. First, Christianity has elevated Jesus into a God-man who mediates between the human and the divine. This was harmful and unnecessary. Stress on Jesus interrupts the mutuality between God and man which Judaism knows to be available to all. The mediator actually distances man from God. Man is correlated with God through reason, a pan-human possession, not through Jesus.

A second and related problem is this: although Christianity, borrowing from Judaism, understands the unity of humanity, it perversely fragments that unity. Unlike Judaism, which acknowledges that all the righteous of the nations have a share in the world to come, Christianity restricts God's grace to those who submit to the mediator. Christianity takes one step forward from pagan antiquity by asserting the messianic unity of humanity, then takes two steps back by qualifying and restricting it. Cohen, of course, does not see the uniqueness and exclusivity of the people Israel as a disruption of this human unity, for he understands Israel to exist for the sake of all the peoples. He understands the uniqueness of God to require that one unique people, Israel, be wholly dedicated to bringing the world to God.

In Cohen's mature thought, then, Christianity receives an ambivalent appraisal. Judaism is, as he put it, the "religion of reason," the religion that

is fully expressive of the dynamic, personal correlation between man and God. Judaism is the religion that expresses the divine-human collaboration in bringing about the kingdom of God. Christianity, insofar as it takes elements from Judaism, participates in this redemptive process, but it also impedes the process for it is not a religion of emergent, moral reason.

Although Cohen's thought shifted dramatically back to explicitly Jewish concerns, in many ways his vision remains profoundly secular. The kingdom he envisions is basically an enlightened, socialist democracy, where—at the risk of glibness—German is spoken. Judaism is validated insofar as it contributes to this eventuality. Those elements of Judaism that are unassimilable to rationalism, Jewish mysticism for example, are discarded. Christianity is judged by its compatibility with this rational, essentially secular ideal. Like Mendelssohn, Cohen has justified Judaism through an extrinsic, philosophical ideal and then judged Christianity for its failure to approach that norm. Although like Mendelssohn a religious thinker, his categories are borrowed from the secular sphere, which *pro tanto* becomes both judge and jury for Judaism and Christianity.

Cohen died in 1918 still convinced that his beloved Germany was the bearer of an Enlightenment whose *Doppelgaenger* was Judaism. Cohen's disciple, the saintly Leo Baeck (1873-1956), had no such illusions. Baeck, the last great leader of Liberal Judaism in Germany, was called by fate to stand with his people in their darkest hours. Declining numerous offers to emigrate, Baeck led German Jewry in the 1930s. Deported to Terezin concentration camp in 1943, he served as a source of spiritual resistance. He settled in London after his liberation in 1945 and continued his rabbinic leadership until his death.

Baeck was a prolific writer, and in his lifelong output the relationship between Judaism and Christianity underwent numerous treatments. He wrote of the Gospels as "documents of Jewish faith" and saw Jesus as a native Jewish figure who must be reclaimed by the history of Jewish faith. Jesus, he wrote, was "a man with noble features who lived in the land of the Jews in tense and excited times and helped and labored and suffered and died: a man out of the Jewish people who walked on Jewish paths with Jewish faith and hopes. His spirit was at home in the Holy Scriptures, and his imagination and thought were anchored there; and he proclaimed and taught the word of God because God had given it to him to hear and to preach. . . . We behold a man who is Jewish in every feature and trait of his character, manifesting in every particular what is good and pure in Judaism. This man could have developed as he came to be only

on the soil of Judaism; and only on this soil, too, could he find his disciples and followers. Here alone, in this Jewish sphere . . . could this man live his life and meet his death—a Jew among Jews. Jewish history and Jewish reflection may not pass him by. . . .”

This positive assessment and reclamation of Jesus is tied to an extraordinarily sharp polemic against Christianity, however. Baeck distinguishes between Jesus and the Church, Jesus and Paul, in a manner thoroughly exploited by earlier generations of German Jewish historians and polemicists. Jesus was authentically Pharisaic, exemplifying the classical ethical rigorism of the rabbis. Paul, however, introduced romantic, Greco-Oriental elements into Jesus’ religion. The historic church, by the end of the first century already dominated by Paulinism, separates itself from Jesus’ Judaism, indeed from Jesus. The Gospels themselves are thoroughly overlaid with Pauline distortion and the original Jewish message must be extracted from the text through applying a criterion of dissimilarity: Whatever does not agree with Paulinism belongs to the original Jewish Jesus.

In Baeck’s view, there are two types of religion: the classical and the romantic, or to use Nietzsche’s categories (which Baeck does not), the Apollonian and the Dionysian. Rabbinic Judaism is the lead historical example of the classical; Christianity exemplifies the romantic. Romantic religion luxuriates in a sense of world-weary powerlessness; it hungers for escape from dreary and deadening reality through ecstatic abandonment. Rules, duty, ethics are seen as meaningless shards of an earthbound consciousness. Myth, mysticism, loss of autonomy, renunciation of conscience and freedom for a headlong flight into an emotive beyond characterize romantic religion. “It wants to be seized and inspired from above,” Baeck wrote, “embraced by a flood of grace which should descend upon it to consecrate it and possess it—a will-less instrument of the wondrous ways of God.”

Against this type of religiosity, Baeck posits Judaism as the chief historical representative of classical religion. Classical religion is a sober piety of ethical idealism. Taking history seriously as the field of moral duty, classical religion eschews escapist fantasies of myth and subjectivity and dedicates itself to building a culture protective of human dignity. For the classical religionist, the Jew, religion is a fighting for freedom and justice in a strenuous process of wrestling with culture, a struggling to fulfill the commandment. Law is not despised. Law is the austere empire that must rule refractory reality province by province, commandment by commandment.

For the romantic, the Christian, the Law is cast off. Grace has already swept the self-absorbed sinner

away into its present and coming order of perfection. Romantic religion thus “lacks any inner compulsion to approach political and economic life in order to make it more ethical and to drive it forward. Its indifference toward any earthly upward tendency has always made it easy for romantic religion to defend submission to every earthly yoke, even to preach it. From the Pauline exhortation, ‘Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers,’ one has always and with the greatest of ease got to the point of first tolerating every despotism and of then soon consecrating it.”

Baeck wrote these words in 1938. He tied the Nazi catastrophe directly to the spiritual history of the West. He blamed Christianity, at least in its Catholic and Lutheran forms, for shaping the spiritual climate in which Nazism with its religion-like demand for total absorption and its religion-like promise of realized eschatology could arise. Nazism both fills the political vacuum romantic religion creates in its abandonment of ethics and history and offers a fitting political expression for those world-weary longings for a new world now.

This is an extraordinarily harsh indictment of Christianity. But synagogues burned in the background, and the Jews stood alone. Although Baeck revised his judgments somewhat after the war, his basic typology remained intact. Baeck fought against the secular order of his time with all his strength and—there can be no doubt—his weapons came from the arsenal of authentic Jewish spirit. Yet, in his theology at least, Baeck juxtaposed an idealized Judaism, a Judaism shorn of its own elements of romanticism, political passivity, and ahistoricity, to a caricatured Christianity. Baeck’s idealized Judaism was informed by some particularly Germanic components: Kantian ethics, for example. And Baeck’s arguments for Judaism’s superior (vis-à-vis Christianity’s) compatibility with a classic, Apollonian ideal sound like Cohen’s project of pairing Judaism with the history and religion of reason. In this way, Baeck must be seen as positing the standard against which both Judaism and Christianity are judged (and Christianity found wanting) on grounds rather independent of Judaism as such. It is the paradigm of “classical religion,” not, say, the *halakhah*, which provides the criterion for the judgment.

Mendelssohn, Cohen, and Baeck acquiesce in the modern project. They justly decry those features of modernity that threaten Jews and Judaism, linking the threatening elements with a Christianity not yet mastered. For each, a meta-religious standard serves as the criterion, yet the standard is not perceived as extrinsic. It is brought into the heart of Judaism as such. Judaism becomes modern Judaism and the transformation is celebrated. The inertia Christianity displays vis-à-vis this transformation is grounds for condemnation of the latter.

The relationship between Jew and Christian is ideally that of moderns who are committed to, yet critical of, their own traditions in the name of supervening standards of judgment.

In Franz Rosenzweig and Martin Buber, we encounter a fundamentally different attitude toward the modern and hence toward the Jewish and the Christian.

For Rosenzweig (1886-1929), the world constituted by secular modernity, by culture, by philosophy is at heart an inauthentic world. Philosophy, the emblem of the secular, arises in the dread of death and is an attempt to flee death by refuge in generality, in abstraction, in universality. The authentic individual shuns this illusory immortality by taking a stand in revealed religion, in Judaism or in Christianity. Here one comes to terms with what it means to be human. To be human is to stand in a mutual relationship with the world and with God. To be human is to experience the world and God redemptively approaching each other; to assist in the dawning of redemption through prayer and love. To stand outside of Judaism or Christianity in any of the postures of secular culture (or of other religions, for that matter) is to live broken and incomplete, outside of the redemptive process that Judaism and Christianity know and advance.

In Rosenzweig's theology, reality is composed of three irreducible elements that progressively come into correct relationship with each other: man, world, and God. Creation, Revelation, and Redemption signify stages in this process of relating. Creation signifies God and world coming into relationship with one another. Revelation signifies God and man coming into relationship. At any stage in the process short of redemption, the internal relations between the elements are distorted and incomplete. Without revelation, for example, human beings exist in relationship with the world, but not with God. For such human beings, the Greeks or the Indians, there are gods, but they are the gods of mythology: worldly, capricious, anthropomorphic gods; gods whose wisdom and will are merely those of man.

Into the world as creation with its stymied men and gods, God discloses himself. God reveals himself to man not just as distant Creator, but as ever-present Lover. In accepting revelation, man discovers himself as ever-renewed soul, made human by his relationship with a loving God.

Ultimately, the world, related to God in Creation, and man, related to God in Revelation, come into fulfilled and harmonious relationship with one another in Redemption. The three irreducible elements—man, world, and God—achieve appropriate interrelatedness at the end of time. Redemption is promoted by human work: by the work of the two revelatory congregations, Judaism and

Christianity each pursuing their revelatory destinies. Rosenzweig conceives of Judaism and Christianity as different but equal vehicles for the divine-human cooperation in Redemption. They are both bonded and broken; their complementarity and antagonism are marks of the unredeemed state of man, world, and God. Redemption will involve the overcoming of both Judaism and Christianity in a oneness of truth known to God alone. Until then, each has its partial truth; each has its unique, proleptically redemptive way. The Jewish way is to be outside of time and history, to tend a hidden garden, to biologically endure. The Christian way is to conquer all that is pagan including that paganism still alive in the Christian soul. The Christian masters history through mission. The Jew leaves history to the Christian and nurtures his own eternity. Judaism is the fire at the core of the "Star of Redemption." Christianity is the rays spreading out into the world from the hidden Jewish core. Christianity needs Judaism for its fuel and Judaism needs Christianity for its historical efficacy as a redemptive force.

Rosenzweig casts the Jewish-Christian relationship and the character of Christianity on a vast metaphysical backdrop in which the unique social and intellectual features of modernity dissolve. Indeed, Rosenzweig began his journey of faith in a profound turning from secular modernity and its academic culture of relativism and historicism. On the verge of converting to Christianity, he discovered a living Judaism and then came to inhabit a theological world in which the secular was fully transcended. Christianity is seen as a powerful, vital historical force by no means relativized or subordinated to modernity. Indeed, history is Christian for Rosenzweig. The Jews are not an historical people.

Martin Buber (1878-1965), Rosenzweig's friend and collaborator, is best known for his philosophy of dialogue. Buber sought to transcend the religious categories of normative, historical Judaism and to reconstitute a Judaism where dialogue, openness to the radical immanence of the other—whether that other is man or God—would be the central praxis. In Buber's understanding of Judaism, those men and those movements which lived the life of encounter with the living presence of God are the authentic bearers of the Jewish spirit. Early Hasidism, for example, illustrates for him the power of the dialogic life. The hasidim lived in deep, personal encounter with God such that they developed new forms of community which, in turn, transformed their human encounters with one another. True encounter with God and true encounter with one's human neighbor are necessarily linked.

In Buber's reading of Jewish history, Jesus and

his community of disciples constitute another authentic moment in the “subterranean” history of the dialogic, Jewish spirit. Buber felt so close to Jesus’ Judaism that he referred to him as “my great brother.” He argued that Jews can understand Jesus better than Christians and that Christians ought to listen to Jews if they want to come closer to Jesus. Yet unlike other Jews who have reclaimed Jesus for the Jewish history of faith, Buber did not simply assert that Christians got it wrong when they found in Jesus a Lord and Savior. Although Buber firmly rejected any such belief for Jews, he refused to judge Christians for it. That is, he refused to believe that there was any neutral rational criterion by which he could decide that Christians had somehow erred in their relationship with Jesus.

Buber believed that, this side of the messianic age, Christians and Jews must necessarily misunderstand each other. The other’s heart of faith can only be known within the other’s community. The Church can only see Israel as blind to the evident truth of Christ; Israel can only see the Church as presumptuous and premature in its assertion that redemption has begun. What Buber hoped, and what apparently served as the religious basis of his own dialogic encounters with Christians, was that Jew and Christian could recognize the fact of one another’s faith. Or, more precisely, that they could recognize the other’s being as rooted in unique faith and that, furthermore, this faith was faith in the same, unique One. Buber believed that Jews and Christians could acknowledge that each lives in a different room of the same mansion. Before the coming—or the return—of the messiah, the wall between the rooms is permanent. But the house is a common house. It is the One God’s house.

Buber thus validates Christian faith. Although he refuses to judge that faith by extrinsic, secular criteria, he nonetheless makes some judgments on the basis of internal, Jewish criteria. Those criteria are, of course, what he takes to be the constitutive marks of the faith of Jesus. No less than Leo Baeck, Buber has a devastating critique of Paul. He sees Paul as having introduced Greek elements foreign to the Jewish faith of Jesus. Jesus exemplifies *emunah*: total trust and reliance on God. Paul’s version of faith is *pistis*: a more intellectual belief in the truth of something. For Buber, Paul interrupts the Jewish history of faith as dialogic encounter with the living God. Paul turns Jesus into a mediator to heal the breach in this now-weakened biblical faith. Instead of Jesus’ own simple and immediate sense of trust in God, Paul innovates Christian faith as belief in Jesus. The intimacy between man and God is lost; the human ability to seek that intimacy is deprecated as “works”; and the willingness of God to enter into the dialogic encounter of intimacy is restricted to those who

believe in Christ.

Buber rejects Paul from a standpoint within the history of Jewish faith, and consequently judges negatively those phases of historical Christianity in which Pauline ideas predominate. Although he believed, as we saw, that Jews and Christians are ultimately mysterious to one another, he apparently thought that his Jewish faith provided enough of a common border with Christianity so that some radical insights and judgments were possible. Buber devoted his life to the renewal of Judaism and hoped, as well, for a renewal of Christianity. He wanted Christianity to transcend some of its Pauline features and find a new voice with which to address the nations. In his view, both faith communities are absorbed in internal struggles for renewal. These struggles are of the greatest consequence for the redemption of the world. As social critic, Buber was deeply critical of the alienated life of modern man and believed that biblical faith, in both its Jewish and Christian forms, had promise for social renewal. Unlike Rosenzweig, Buber did not believe that history belonged to Christianity. Rather, he saw Jews and Christians—and others—as its shapers and victims. The ongoing utility of Christianity lay in the spiritual possibility, the life of dialogue, that it provided its adherents.

In Rosenzweig and Buber then, Christianity is grounded in an authentic reality of faith. Secular modernity provides no standard by which Christianity should be judged. Jews and Christians, although antagonists, have distinct roles in the divine plan. Their separate existences are destined to endure. Despite antagonism and estrangement, conversation is possible.

The conversation, it would seem, is *le-shem shamayim*, for the sake of heaven.

The modern Jewish theological encounter with Christianity thus reflects different underlying judgments about the character of modernity itself. Judgment as to whether rational, secular criteria of coherence or intelligibility are sufficient or are irrelevant; and as to whether contemporary history is secular or religious in essence. Judgments on these matters shape one’s thoughts about Western Judaism’s great religious Other.

Is this mirror of modern Jewish thought a dark glass for Christians in which their own image is only obscurely reflected? I suspect that it is. The internal concerns for renewal, the struggle for vital intellectual, if not physical, survival that pervade Jewish thought might be opaque to Christians. At any rate, these Jewish images of the other, created by liberal scholars who are themselves invariably products of modernity, at least show how little modernity serves to unify. That fundamental differences should be so intensively cultivated by even the most modern points to the limits of the

modern. Authentic encounter between Christian and Jew, not less than authentic Jewish reflection on the Christian other, finds its basis in that which transcends the modern. It is neither the mutual unknowing nor the mutual estrangement from tradition that permits conversation, but grounded-

ness in separate pasts and paths, differentness that resists the stipulation of a higher identity. Not relativism, but a permanent pluralism of the ultimate, is the condition of Jewish-Christian encounter in our time. ET

Plantation

Too late for the tour and the history lesson,
too late in the season on this southern plantation,
and the ancient, front-line cedar soldiers
backed up by a strong regiment of hollies
are not telling what they know.

I walk on the old brick, caulked with thin moss,
but soon overlaid with a thickening vision
of feet, brown and bare, trudging with toil
out to the fields and the kitchen;
of feet fair and slippered, skipping in fun,
tapping the tune of a debutante ball;
or of feet hard and booted, strutting to hunt,
commanding the land, parading to war.

Looking forward, from youth and life, how easy to wear
soft slippers of pleasure or safe boots of power.
But looking back from age and death, better to have had
the bare feet of feeling, in touch with the ground,
in true company with man.
Let me pray not to be the shameful ghost of the owner,
but rather the noble phantom of the owned.

On tiptoe, I peer into the windows
of the slave's cabin and then the master's mansion;
But in both the spiders have webbed the corners,
and the inner shutters shade their private rooms,
or perhaps the glass is too antique,
For the only face that stares back,
and the only civil war left to fight
is my own.

Ellie Shumaker

Victims Unlimited

John P. Sisk

In this highly individualistic age, it is probably safe to assume about every victim what Tolstoy at the beginning of *Anna Karenina* assumes about every unhappy family: that each is unhappy in his or her own way. This could mean that to think about victimization now is to be overwhelmed with an infinite variety, the prospect of which can be a good deal less attractive than Cleopatra's infinite variety was to Marc Anthony. We have been made so conscious of the victims among us that it is possible to feel discriminated against and therefore victimized if we cannot see ourselves and induce others to see us as authentic victims. Even happy families, which for Tolstoy are all alike in their happiness, may be even more alike as breeding grounds for that victimizing assault on the self we know as codependency, especially as it is defined by Melody Beattie's best-selling *Codependent No More*.

If the varieties of victimization really were infinite, the subject would, of course, be a hard one to talk about and act on, and humans would have to endure one another the way families endure eccentric relatives at Christmas time. We avoid this grim possibility by classifying victims in terms of gender, race, sibling relationship, institutional situation, physical or mental impairment, etc. But it may be useful to reduce this taxonomy by concentrating on the different styles with which victims come to our attention.

To begin with, self-conscious victims tend understandably to be seriously engaged if not downright embattled people who understand themselves and address the world in an adversarial and reductive style that anticipates quick results. It is at its most striking when it proposes not a measured reconsideration of received opinion but a total

and morally mandated reversal of it. In the present environment its model is popular exposé literature that employs a hyped-up style as a means of liberating the public from its victimization by misinformation or no information at all. The gay activist group "Outpost," for instance, imitates this model when it exposes the homosexuality of celebrities who in their preference for the silence of the closet have not only made life more burdensome for those outside it but have cheated the public out of the information it is entitled to.

The strength of exposé style is its ability to exploit the public's inclination to identify newsworthiness, truth, liberation, and entertainment with reversals of established valuation. In her brilliant 1991 Jefferson Lecture, "Of Heroes, Villains, and Valets" (reprinted in the June 1991 *Commentary*), Gertrude Himmelfarb spells out the cultural consequences of the reversal of values implied by Hegel's famous remark that "No man is a hero to his valet." Here the valet has become the central figure in a reductionist's exposé that for Himmelfarb points to a new history and a new biography in which the discriminated against and victimized are disemburdened "of the very idea of greatness." One consequence is the writing of history "from below" with its "exclusion or belittling of subjects—great figures, great events, great ideas—which actually determine the course of history for *all* people." This reversal Professor Himmelfarb sees at work in the now familiar attacks on the "canon," that victimizing institution dominated by "dead white males." One reaction is a feminist "counter-canon" that shares with other counter-canons a rejection of the idea "that there are truths that transcend race, gender, and class, and that all people, even ordinary people, can share in such truths and be elevated by them."

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All social and moral codes, of course, can be seen as victimizing institutions that represent the throttling hold of the dead hand of the past, and so constitute emergency situations that activate a reductive adversarial style. The result, as political scientist Jean Bethke Elshtain points out in "Feminism and Politics" (*Partisan Review*, Spring 1990), is that the subject of gender is all too often treated with "categorical rigidities and rhetorical overkill" that lock opponents inside a charmed circle of righteously and dogmatically indignant simplifiers. To them, Elshtain opposes "those feminist writers and scholars who refuse to join the circle, who retain their independence of mind and thought" and thus "in the long run better serve any feminism worth its salt." The same thing could be said of those feminists who objected to the obscuring simplifications of rape in Susan Brownmiller's *Against Our Will*, or more recently to what Lori Dickstein has called the relentless haranguing of Andrea Dworkin's attack on sexist atrocities in *Letters From the War Zone*.

It is to be expected that the adversarial style of the proclaimed victim will be severely reductive. Victims see themselves in a situation so unnatural, immoral, and exigent that liberation is impossible unless victimizers accept without qualification the victims' perspective and style. The victimizer's reduction of the victim to a position far below his or her deserts is itself seen to be the consequence of an extreme and canonically sanctified adversarial style that has no ground to stand on when its tradition-sanctioned reductions have been revealed. So the victim can quite righteously aspire to a complete reversal of canonical arrangements: valet becomes equal to hero, perhaps even reduces hero to the valethood that the reversal reveals to have been the truth about him to begin with.

Something like this reversal is in mind when a black professor claims that blacks are racially superior to whites because the latter lack the melanin that makes black skin, or when school reformers propose curriculum changes that "instill pride and self-esteem in black children" by presenting Africa as the birthplace of Western civilization. This is no less an ambitious reversal of canonical arrangements than that we find in Marx's elevation of the lowly proletariat in *The Communist Manifesto*, in Charles Reich's glorification of the rock-and-drug-bemused hippie in *The Greening of America*, or in R. Buckminster Fuller's prediction that by the twenty-first century women "will have taken over management of spaceship earth."

To the British poet Robert Graves the latter reversal would have meant the triumphant return of the White Goddess and the permanent subordination of the victimizing patriarchy, but it would be bad news for those male liberation groups that gather for ritual sweats and drumbeat dances in

primitive camp-outs. In the short run, of course, the Fuller-Graves glorified sexism, no less than the resurgent masculinity of Sam Keen's *Fire in the Belly* and Robert Bly's *Iron John* or the Afrocentric cultural theories, may promise a great bonus of self-esteem for established victim groups and empower their adversarial styles. But the problem is the damage done to the victims when they discover that their anticipations of an improved future are based less on fact than the momentary needs of propaganda. "It is simply irresponsible," Andrew Hacker has observed, "to tell children of an underclass that their salvation lies in flights of rhetoric." One can imagine the consequences for the blacks and their sympathizers in the pre-Civil War South if they had taken the word of southern rhetoricians like George Fitzhugh that their condition was far superior to those "free" whites in the North who were enslaved victims to a ruthless capitalism.

There is, of course, nothing unnatural about the reductiveness of an adversarial style. Any style expresses a choice among possible styles and is therefore to some extent or other reductive, though it need not deny the validity of styles not chosen. But for people like Jacques Lacan, human utterance, however styled, is by virtue of its inescapable reductiveness fundamentally untrustworthy and precedes all other forms of victimization. Our only chance for liberation from the deceptions of language is an unremitting deconstructive effort, paradoxically through language itself. In the meantime (and especially in a democracy) the victim has the advantage of an established expectation that a reductive adversarial style, unnuanced though it may be, is the authentic sign of victimization: people who really hurt are expected to scream, not whimper or undercut their suffering selfhood with dainty ironies. This is why historicizing efforts to quiet or slow down the victim by putting him in the larger picture are so offensive to him. Such tactics are to be expected from the duplicitous and power-motivated patriarchy of reason; the bottom line is that he hurts now and wants justice now at the expense of whatever canonical reversals. His style may only aggravate his sense of victimization, but embattled engagement leads him to believe that style is his best weapon and that to modify it is to make dangerous concessions to the victimizer, an idea so well epitomized by the gay group "Act Up." Besides, the self-exacerbation of adversarial style keeps the victim's attention and energy concentrated for action.

Society for its part—motivated no doubt as much by prudence as respect for the First Amendment—has learned that if the victim is forbidden to speak his mind, however reductively, in the public marketplace, the enforced silence may drive him subversively underground and perhaps to violent

action. With freedom of speech so broadly interpreted as it is, there is of course no guarantee victims will be satisfied with mere speech, any more than gay liberationists were when they attacked St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York, or Los Angeles ghetto dwellers were when they tried to burn down the environment they identified with their victimization. Still it is very easy to believe—indeed, in the interest of public peace of mind it is even necessary to believe—that no matter what its style, talk is cheap in the sense that it is an inexpensive way out of tense social and political situations. As commonly understood now, the implied promise of the First Amendment (itself part of a revolutionary rejection of valetude) is that in the long run all will be well, and perhaps victimization will be no more, if all parties are permitted to speak out in whatever style they prefer.

Now as always, this expectation is complicated by the linguistic and social dialects of hyperbole. Hyperbole is an extreme case of reductionism in which one effectively (and not always consciously) gives away a lot to gain a little, that wasted lot being justified by an apparent emergency situation. Hyperbole hopes for true believers who will accept its wastefulness as part of privileged discourse, not as a deformation of consciousness in which pressing momentary needs have trapped one into giving too much away. Thus victimized hyperbolizers like the Irish Republican Army or the Muslim Hezbollah party demonstrate an epistemological and ideological clarity of purpose that is both intimidating and enviable in its appropriation of the high moral ground.

Hyperbolizers are especially likely to become violently engaged with opposing epistemologies and ideologies because they tend to conceive the latter in counter-hyperbolic terms. The French Revolution's firebrand St. Just had no doubt that the Old Regime's position, being absolutely corrupt, was absolutely unprivileged, so that, as the historian Eugen Weber remarks, "means inexcusable in the support of tyranny were legitimized by defense of liberty." Indeed, hyperbole quite normally dictates the response of counter-hyperbole, as can be seen in Camille Paglia's *Sexual Personae*. Up to a point, Paglia is on Himmelfarb's side in defense of the established canon and in her hostility to feminist theorists like Susan Sontag, Germaine Greer, and Kate Millet, to say nothing of those French troublemakers ("termites") Lacan, Foucault, and Derrida. But she comes on in a style pitched as reductively high as that of her opposition. Lacan, she says, "is a tyrant who must be driven from our shores," and the thought that he has seduced "congenial female professors" leads her to exclaim: "Let's dump the French in Boston Harbor and let them swim home."

No doubt, for many of Ms. Paglia's readers the witty immoderation of her style gives her an advantage over lower-keyed and more discriminating critics like Himmelfarb and Elshtain, especially since the latter are not able, as Paglia is, to work an admiration for Jimi Hendrix, James Brown, and Madonna into their critical programs. Paglia's problem as an engaged social critic, however, is how to survive the discounting impulse that is the normal cybernetic reaction to hyperbolic statement. Humans being by nature hyperbolizers, it follows that the problem of growing up anywhere is inseparable from the search for the rate at which the excesses of the enveloping culture must be discounted if one is not to be victimized by them. As we know, in a media-exacerbated capitalist democracy this means that advertisers and politicians, no less than literary artists, prophets, and public scolds, must take into account the public's discounting impulse as they attempt to establish privileged positions safe from all discounting. If the result at one extreme is a hermeneutics of suspicion that threatens the integrity of self and society, at the other it is a diehard, if implicit, utopianism that expects a remorseless discounting to arrive at a clarity impervious to all discounting—which is of course the condition of any successful totalitarian system.

The victim suffers from the repetitiveness of his condition, but the repetitiveness that really threatens him is that of the discounting process itself, which is the means the public uses to lower the din of conflicting claims to its attention. In this circumstance victims, having found themselves in the breakup of previously unquestioned valuing systems, begin to sound alike as they multiply, caricature one another in extremes of adversarial style, and threaten to cancel one another out as they put too much strain on the economy of public sympathy. A victim these days is in the best possible position to discover that he or she may be threatened most by other categories of victims. Thus dreams of a grand rainbow coalition of victims can flounder in the discovery that common victimhood is not an adequate unifier: not when some victims are convinced that their own victimization is more exigent and authentic than that of others. Indeed, the image of Black Lib, Gay Lib, Fem Lib, Men's Lib, and Native American Lib marching shoulder-to-shoulder into a victimless future suggests a new Coxey's Army in which one component after another loses heart and defects as it discovers that its own cause is being discounted in the common effort. So a media-hyped society multiplies victims with a generous hand, but at the same time, with a survivalist's cunning, uses that multiplication as a means of ignoring those victims most deserving of assistance.

And then there is the discounting and defusing effect when victimization is transmuted into the forms of public entertainment that enlist public sympathy with a prudent hand so that there is always plenty left over for the next talk show or the next rap group's album that will ride high on *Billboard's* pop-album chart as it gives vent to its well-paid rage against a victimizing adult society. In fact, the transmutation of victimization into entertainment might be called the minstrel-show effect, thanks to which a media-rich society discovers that its cornucopia of injustices is biodegradable after all. In proportion as victimization becomes entertainment (as it does, for instance, in the Donahue, Geraldo, Oprah Winfrey, and Sally Jesse Raphael TV shows), the public is subtly encouraged to take the long view in the face of the adversarial posture of the numerous victims: bear with them patiently and they will either go away or we will learn to live comfortably with them, perhaps even discovering that a hidden hand is at work transmuting private victimization into public virtues.

The adversarial style of particular victims, or even of victims in coalition, cannot avoid publicizing victimization itself in a way that can have an unanticipated discounting effect. This is the dilemma of the advertiser who cannot advertise a particular product without advertising the class in which it belongs: an enticing pitch for Coors encourages beer drinking generally. Thus, proclaimed victims by advertising their victimization encourage other victims to discover and proclaim theirs. After "Outpost" vigorously asserts its victimization by forcing gay celebrities out of the closet it is no surprise to learn that there is a Bald Urban Liberation Brigade that attempts to counter the victimizing bias against baldness by revealing the "closet" baldness of apparently hirsute celebrities. Any increase in the company of particular classes of victims may appear to be an advantage: there is strength in numbers. But at the same time the multiplication works against the particular victim's need to be singular and special (who will take him seriously if he is not?). Worst of all, an increase in the variety of victims risks the discounting discovery of victimization as the general human condition in which heroes are as much to be pitied as valets. In such an expanded definition of victimization the adversarial style of the particular victim may seem irrelevant in anyone but romantic rebels like Nietzsche or E. M. Cioran, whose sense of being meaningfully alive depends on their codependent opposition to any status quo whatever.

The discovery of universal victimization can result in the apathy, cynicism, and despair that prepares a public for the vengeful entertainments of indiscriminate and desecratory violence—novels like Bret Easton Ellis' *American Psycho*, for in-

stance, or the extravagant adolescent rages of rock groups like Guns N' Roses and Metallica. The more traditional and respectable response, however, is the stoic style, which may, of course, be little more than an epicurean's technique for enduring the reversals of human expectation with a minimum of discomfort, perhaps with the Hemlock Society's hopeful option of painless suicide. More toughly considered, however, the stoic style, whether we find it in the Greeks Heraclitus and Zeno, the Romans Seneca and Marcus Aurelius, or in the Christians Origen and Tertullian, aims to secure peace of mind by discounting the passion-driven claims of the quotidian and phenomenal world. It characteristically assumes something like Heraclitus' immutable reason—a structure of moral and physical laws that it is folly to resist or attempt to reform—and even promotes a hopeful laissez-faire expectation that things will work themselves out if we can restrain our impulses to interfere with the canon of nature's processes. The aim of the wise man, as Marcus Aurelius tells us in his Stoic Code, is to "cease to be whirled around" by distracting external things; for Seneca it is to make oneself invulnerable to what Hamlet calls "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune."

For many of us, Hamlet is the prince of victims and his famous "To be or not to be" soliloquy is still one of the best summations of universal victimization that we have. His very quotable malcontentedness with the injustices of the human condition makes him a blood brother to every canon-bashing lib movement. But at the end of the play, when Horatio asks him to forestall the duel with Laertes, he comes on with the style of Seneca and Marcus Aurelius:

Not a whit, we defy augury; there's a special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now, 'tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come; the readiness is all. Since no man knows aught of what he leaves, what is't to leave betimes? Let be.

If, as some have argued, there is more pagan skepticism than Christian resignation in this statement, it nevertheless continues to compel pagan and Christian with its discounting formula for a world bedeviled by the conflicting adversarial voices of victimization: let be; cease to be whirled about. It is not surprising that repetitions of this stoic aspiration should be found in hyperactive and Faustian American culture. In *The Great Gatsby*, for instance, this is the desire of the narrator Nick Carraway when he has returned home after the riotous and whirled-about events that are his story. Like Heraclitus, or Horatio Alger's heroes, for that matter, he "wants the world to be in uniform and

at a sort of moral attention forever." So in Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* as the Compsons are being whirled about passionately we are asked to admire their black retainers, especially Dilsey, without whose capacity to endure there could be no story. Similarly, we are asked to admire Hemingway's sorely beset heroes because of the stoic invulnerability of their style, thanks to which they are able to endure in their whirled-about environment.

It is character as we see it in the Greco-Roman stoics, Christian ascetics, the medieval knight, the Horatio Alger hero, or the legendary cowboy that gives the individual his or her best chance against the victimization that is the common lot of mankind. It is character that keeps one from being whirled about codependently as Paulo and Francesca are in the "abysmal tempests" of the second circle of Dante's *Inferno*. Heraclitus and Marcus Aurelius would have seen the justice of this punishment since the adulterous lovers had "let Desire pull Reason from her throne." And it is also appropriate that Dante's guide is Virgil, in whose own philosophy there was more than a little of an intelligent Roman's stoicism. But now it is not so easy to go along with Dante and Virgil: we are more inclined to accept D. H. Lawrence's reversal: it is reason, the culture-endorsed euphemism behind which the canonical past does its victimizing work, that has pulled desire from its throne.

Not too long ago, it was the psychedelic drugs that promised to replace character as a defense against both particular and general victimization. It soon became clear that the wistful users had only delivered themselves naked to abysmal tempests. More recently the so-called "smart drugs" (choline, tacrine, amyl nitrate, amino acids, Vasopressin, etc.) have become the character-substitutes of choice. Being psychoactive, not psychedelic, they promise to enhance the operations of the brain so that users are no longer victims of an excess of information. In the hip world of smart drugs there are the usual multicultural and utopian expectations, among them the assumption that the canon which distinguished between hero and valet will become ancient history, if indeed there is any history left to be ancient in. To judge from Gary Wolf's report on these matters in the September 1991 *Rolling Stone*, some smart druggers are such voracious consumers that a skeptic might expect them to end up with the gluttons in the icy rains of Dante's third circle. In the meantime one can only hope that their intrepid attempts at liberation will not result in the disillusioning rediscovery of ancient victimizations.

As Joseph A. Amato points out in his excellent *Victims and Values*, in the stoic tradition and in Western Civilization generally, it is never enough to say that victimization and the suffering it entails

are unmitigated evils, as they are in the Gnostic and Manichaean dispensations. There is much in the Judeo-Christian cultural ecology that inclines us not only to value suffering but to put it in an ironic context. You cannot, for instance, admire the grace the Hemingway hero displays under pressure without seeing the creative interdependence of the grace and the pressure. A pressure beyond the reach of grace suggests the victims of Dante's *Inferno* no less than a pressureless grace suggests the advertiser's vision of utopia, the one as appalling as the other is jejune.

In Shakespeare's *King Lear* it is the graceful conduct of the artist against the pressure of potentially unmanageable material that results in one of our culture's most powerful and ironic statements about the ecology of victimization and suffering. At the end Edgar tells the brutally blinded Gloucester, the victimizing father whom he has saved from despair:

Men must endure
Their going hence, even as their coming
hither:
Ripeness is all.

This "ripeness," like Hamlet's "readiness," comes hard, and we remember that Edgar in an earlier disguise had identified himself to his father as

A most poor man, made tame to fortune's
blows;
Who, by the art of known and feeling sorrows,
Am pregnant to good pity.

The Gloucester to whom these lines are addressed is the man who has already discovered the truth about his evil son Edmund and his own very culpable gullibility only after he had been blinded, a reversal of expectation he summarizes when he says, "I stumbled when I saw." The epistemological paradox here—through agony to insight—is of course disturbing to all bargain-basement New Age psychologies in which clear vision, achieved by smart drugs or however, comes as easily as leaves drop from trees.

Equally disturbing now is the ambiguous relation between power and victimization in the play. Given the competition among victims and their access to the media, it is easier than ever to define victimization reductively as lack of power and to assume that an unqualified liberation will always follow empowerment. But empowerment (it is a familiar stoic and Judeo-Christian theme) can, and routinely does, give one the power to victimize others as an effective means of defining one's own liberation. This is what happens in the play as Edmund, released to power by his mendacity from the victimization of his illegitimacy, uses his new power

to victimize his legitimate half-brother Edgar and becomes for a while the exuberantly empowered confederate of the evil forces that oppose the restoration of legitimate order in the kingdom. Lear himself is a victim of the absolute power that has kept him from learning the truth about himself and about those "Poor naked wretches" whose pathetic powerlessness he discovers only after he has been driven disempowered into the stormy heath. The play of course does not make the reductive point that all power is evil (which would leave in question its own power to make the point) but that power divorced from good pity is worse than powerlessness. In this respect *Lear* avoids the inconsistency of some contemporary victims, who aspire to the power that will liberate them even as they believe (perhaps having read too much Foucault) that all power is evil. At the same time it is quite possible that, being victims in a secular society, their thinking about power will be further complicated by the identification of power with pleasure, so that lawsuits seeking compensation for an impairment of the capacity to enjoy life ("hedonic damages") will seem both logical and moral.

As he begins to experience the agonies of his victimization, Lear is convinced that he is "more sinned against than sinning"—thus placing himself, as victims so often do, in a comfortable moral universe where it is possible for someone, at least someone else, to be guilty of something. It is probably psychologically impossible to be a self-aware victim without assuming such a morality, which is no doubt why victim groups generally come on with an old-fashioned moral absoluteness that itself implies the need of a time-honored canonical moral establishment in which, as Himmelstarn says, even ordinary people can share and be elevated by. A climate of skepticism and relativism is congenial for victims only insofar as they can imagine its replacement by a conservative and enduring arrangement in which they will continue not to be victims—and in which, perhaps, their victimizers will continue to be punished. But even the most absolute of victims have the problem of forgetting that they live in a society inclined to believe that the assignment of guilt to anyone depends on a lack of information about human motivation. To know all may be to eliminate the invidious distinction between victim and victimizer, valet and hero—but perhaps at the risk of merging them in an entropic symbiosis more reminiscent of Dante's second circle than anticipatory of a multicultural one world.

In the ironic perspective of the play it is easy to imagine that Lear like the rest of us suffers from, and as long as he is alive will continue to suffer from, general victimization. Our Everyman, he is beholden to and victimized by nature no less than

by nurture. He could not choose his parentage, time and place of birth, genetic and psychologic makeup. Whatever inner self he was finally able to realize had to be realized in a time-bound context in which autonomy was always limited and precarious. Given his historical moment, he was spared the post-romantic anxieties of self-nurturing that go along with the dogma that a true inner self, to say nothing of a cosmic self, can be discovered and nurtured only in an adversarial relation to all that is the not-self. In the latter instance, and in accord with Foucault's doctrine, he would have had to invent himself against the restraints of canonical thinking much as Hemingway achieves style against the adversary pressure of environment. In such a relationship there is a potential insatiability, so that victims multiply in the interests of the nurturing. Shakespeare's Iago is a perfect anticipation of the insatiable self for whom self-realization is codependent on an endless diet of victims. For such a self the greatest disaster would be a refinement in the fires of suffering that would leave him, like Edgar, pregnant to good pity. Like Edmund, he misses that fate, only to become, like Edmund, a victim of success.

But a skeptical environment that rejects self-nurturing as understood in the traditional canon can turn out to be a victimizer of the self by denying its ontological reality. Among the influential deniers is one of Ms. Paglia's French termites, Jacques Lacan. For him selfhood is one of those baubles constructed by language, which can yield truth only when it is deconstructed, and the unconscious out of which the so-called self emerges is also structured like a language. Insofar as the anxieties of the adversarial self are a significant element in the pathology of modern victimization, Lacan comes on like a perverse analyst who cures his patient by taking from him what he has been led to believe is most precious and then leaving him stranded in the spooky Disneyland of his unconscious. In fact, if Lacan's *Écrits* were more widely read by those convinced of their victimization they might be forced to so interpret their unconscious that they could be victims no more, or victims only of adversaries they never anticipated and cannot handle. In such circumstances they might yearn for the moral clarities of the old canons in which there had been a self to esteem, however victimized. In the meantime, one may wonder how safe Lacan's own truth is from an infinite regress of continuing deconstructions in pursuit of an ultimate victim and an ultimate victimizer—call it a relentless search for a real needle in an artificial haystack.

Certainly in the enterprises of postmodernism and poststructuralism there is a stoic aspiration not to be whirled about in the carnival of phenomenal

life. At the same time both are vulnerable to the stoic temptation to make apathy a prime virtue: let the mad world go its irresistible way. Now as always stoic apathy is a prescription for one kind of total freedom: freedom from the drag of the past, the moil of the present, the anxiety of the future—freedom even from the compulsion to invent a fictive self. The philosopher Leszek Kolakowski has identified this kind of freedom as a modern chimera “which would grant man total freedom from tradition or all pre-existing sense” but ends up suspending him “in a darkness where all things are regarded with equal indifference.”

In this darkness particular victims have no chance: they are as indiscriminately lost in the general victimization as are the denizens of Dante’s *Inferno* and must take whatever comfort they can from the multiplication of their company. They may pity themselves, but the self-pity of the victimized can help to make victimization a dangerously comfortable and even privileged condition in which the demand for pity and empowerment knows no limit. Kolakowski’s chimera discourages a con-

sciousness of limits, which means that it discourages an ironic style that recognizes the finiteness of the human condition. “Religious tradition,” he says, “has taught us to limit ourselves, to place a distance between our needs and our wants.” It is apparent enough that Himmelfarb is aware of the importance of keeping that distance. In *King Lear*, the failure to keep it is what multiplies the victims and makes the tragedy. It is a lack of irony that keeps us from distinguishing between particular and general victimization so that particular victims are oversymbolized, encouraged in their excesses of adversarial style, and prepared for the disillusionment and vengefulness that follow when liberation falls short of utopian expectations.

But irony alone will not serve the needs of justice. Its distancing all too often has the discounting effect of stoic apathy at its worst: it disposes of injustice by turning it into sophisticated entertainment. Only that irony serves justice that makes it possible to recognize Kolakowski’s chimera for what it is while remaining pregnant to Edgar’s good pity. □

Pluralism and the Otherness of World Religions

S. Mark Heim

I

We have witnessed in recent years the flowering of various Christian pluralistic theologies calling for unequivocal affirmation of the equal validity of all world faiths. It is argued that Christianity (and to some extent other traditions) has been infected with a virulent exclusivist virus, the disease of imagining its religious truth superior to all others and its path to salvation the only one. This sickness is perceived as similar to, and in the West often reinforced by, elements of racial and cultural prejudice, so that a devaluation of non-Christian religions goes hand in hand with devaluation of the culture and humanity of those who participate in them.

Advocates of pluralistic theology maintain that there is no antidote to this virus but a consistent reconstruction of the fundamentals of Christian faith. They insist that any responsible theology must now claim the religious experience of all humanity as its ground and avoid shaping its understanding in the terms of only one or a few privileged traditions. Yet these pluralistic theologies themselves, in their methods and categories, bear throughout the very particular marks of Western Christianity's conflict with modernity. Their supposed authority as a basis for reconstructing Christian thought and intensifying understanding among the faiths is hostage to the presumed universality of that conflict: a universality that the premises of the theologies themselves counsel us

to question.

Pluralistic approaches are primarily noted for their conviction that the various religious traditions must all be equally true and saving. No precedence attaches to Christianity; no normative value should be accorded to its particular beliefs or experience or to those of any particular tradition. The minor and often unstated premise of this conviction, however, is that if all faiths are valid, they can be so only at the bar of the same conditions of Western modernity to which Christianity or Judaism have long had to answer. This is the point I want to consider.

In the past, many Christians set terms by which other religions must be considered false. Pluralistic theologies now set terms under which all religions must be considered true. The first set of terms commended conversion to Christian faith, though not necessarily to a single cultural form of it. The second commends conversion of all faiths not to any form of Christianity but to the cultural structures of plausibility against which modern Western Christianity has been tested. Whether this constitutes progress is less obvious than the pluralists assume.

In denying that Christian faith can be taken as the norm for judging other traditions, pluralistic theologies have at the same time tended to presume that the norms they have accepted to judge Christianity in the modern West can be taken as universal standards for reconstructing all faiths. They intend to affirm the various faiths in the strongest way . . . once they have been assimilated to these terms. If this process is not to be an even more egregious imperialism than that attributed to traditional

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Christianity (which after all at least encompassed a quite significant variety of cultures over very many ages), it would seem to require that these norms of modern thought be successfully defended as universal categories and not the peculiar product of Western culture.

Perhaps few are willing to make this as explicit as Raimundo Panikkar. He writes, "The modern kosmology [sic], which assumes that time is linear, that history is paramount, that individuality is the essence of Man, that democracy is an absolute, that technocracy is neutral, that social Darwinism is valid, and so on, cannot offer a fair platform for [interreligious] dialogue. The basis for the dialogue cannot be the modern Western myth." Here Panikkar is a good deal more pluralistic and consistent than many of his companions may find comfortable. For the problem is that each of the major pluralistic theologies takes some one or more elements of "the modern Western myth" as the absolute basis on which the religions can be interpreted into a unified scheme.

In each case, it is a perceived failing or vulnerability of religion—paradigmatically of Judaism and Christianity—in the face of modern criticism that becomes the basis for reconstructing all religion. It is hardly an accident that pluralistic theology, in its definition and treatment of the religions, takes care to inoculate them against just these objections. The question is whether the various religious traditions are equally enthusiastic about this care on their behalf, seeing that it entails a prior acceptance of the validity of Western interpretations of religion. To accept the affirmation of their faith given by the pluralistic theologies, those of other religions would need to agree first that it is actually their faith that these theologies affirm and second that they are willing for their religious life to be cast in the mold pluralistic theology has set for it.

II

A nice example of the difficulties involved appears in a recent exchange between Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Hans Küng. Responding to a presentation on Christian dialogue with Islam in which Küng had said, "It is important that the Qur'an as the word of God be regarded at the same time as the word of the human prophet," Nasr made the observation that very few Muslims indeed would view the Qur'an as other than the actual Word of God received directly by Muhammad. "To assume such a view as a possibility to facilitate dialogue with the Christian world or with the Western world in general does not respond to the reality of the situation."

Küng rejoined that this was as if a Christian were

to say to a Muslim, of the Trinity, that all Christians believe it: if you don't, there can be no dialogue. Should the Muslim object that some Christians seem at the least to have reservations about the Trinity, the Christian would say, perhaps so, but they are wrong. Küng goes on, in regard to the critical historical consciousness he commends: "This is not specifically an Islamic problem, because for a long time in Christianity we had exactly the same thing. And this question was just not allowed to be asked; it was deadly. The story is more or less the same in all religions." With so many bright Muslim students all over the world, he added, it will be impossible in the long run for Islam to avoid these questions. Küng is convinced that "to take a more historical approach to the Qur'an would not damage Muslim faith in the one God and in Muhammad his Prophet, but could strengthen this faith."

Nasr in return makes several points. One is that he has not said the Christian must accept the Muslim belief in order to dialogue, only that the Christian has to recognize that this is the Muslim belief. To talk meaningfully with a person you must see what they are, right now, in themselves, and not what you would like them to be in order for you to talk to them. Nasr also rejects Küng's assumption that the categories of Western modernity are universal and obligatory for all. "Let us imagine for a moment that we are all in Cairo carrying out this dialogue and a Muslim scholar speaks and Professor Küng answers for the Christian side. The Muslim may say that since the Islamic world has followed a certain path and carried out such and such actions, if the West begins to follow the same course, which in all likelihood it will, we will all be able to speak together. Returning to this hemisphere, we see that here there is a presumption that the history of Islam in the future will follow the same path as that of Western civilization from Spinoza to the present. I am very doubtful about that. . . ."

Aside from the shaky analogy Küng seems to assume between the role of the Bible and its historical-critical interpretation within Christianity and the role of the Qur'an within Islam, we can see the main issue here. Küng would not think of saying that in the long run Muslims—especially bright young ones—will be unable to avoid a doctrine similar to the Trinity, or of saying that on the grounds of his Christian faith he rejects certain Muslim tenets as impossible. That would be particularism of the worst sort.

However, he does say that to contemplate preferring the Muslim version of the crucifixion to the Gospel's version, when it is the case of a seventh-century source over against those six hundred years earlier is "for an historically thinking man, I think, personally impossible." Nasr inconveniently fails

to agree that this is simply a neutral statement of universal principles that apply equally to people in all cultures and religions, the application of these principles being an area where Muslims have just not yet caught up. Küng's assurance that adopting the categories of historical consciousness developed in the West need not be feared because Christians have developed ways to cope with them—ways Muslims presumably would adapt—seems not to envision the possibility that those ways might be anything less than enviable to others. Nasr gently chides Küng's confidence that the modern *problems*, if not the traditional answers, of Christianity constitute the necessary crown of other traditions' development.

It is often observed that some form of the golden Rule is nearly universal among religions. Our example illustrates the ambiguity of this observation. Even if all believe we should do unto our neighbors as we would have our neighbors do unto us, *what* we want done for us may not be at all what our neighbor wants done for him. The offer to be inoculated against the dangers of modernity, made on the solicitous ground that modernity in its Western form is the destiny of every faith, is apparently an offer that can be refused. It can be refused either on the grounds that not everyone is required to replicate the West's history or on the grounds that the specific responses recommended are not highly convincing.

I am quite aware that Küng is not himself a full-fledged pluralist theologian. And it may be that Nasr overstates the total unanimity of Muslims on this subject—though such overstatement is vastly less than Christians will suppose by analogy to attitudes toward the Bible. That does not affect the point.

If the Muslim is not willing to acknowledge and discuss the historical conditioning of the revelation in the Qur'an, Küng seems to suggest, there is little to talk about. A similar viewpoint is expressed surprisingly often by pluralists. At one conference, a well-known pluralist theologian said, in good humor, to a decidedly non-pluralist representative of another religious tradition, a veteran of long years of interfaith discussions, "With your views, you shouldn't be involved in dialogue." "Nevertheless, I am," he replied, and suggested that it was perhaps the pluralist theory that ought to be adjusted and not the reality he represented. In any event, he continued, when liberal Christians and liberals of other traditions get together to talk about their liberalism, he did not call that dialogue. This affable exchange was capped by another pluralist voice in the audience who argued that though this person might dialogue "after a fashion," he would be unable to participate in authentic dialogue until he had adopted a pluralistic outlook. Here it would

seem that the old lamented triumphalist attitudes of Christians toward others remain in vigorous health as applied by pluralists to those of different views in any faith.

No doubt a primary motive of pluralistic theologies is to affirm the validity of various religious traditions. But it is an implicit primary assumption of such theologies that these traditions are without exception indefensible as they stand. Only as demythologized, adapted to the categories of critical historical thought, put in the context of Western understandings of epistemology, and measured against modern conceptions of equality and justice can these religions be pronounced valid. It could be no other way, since only in these terms can Christianity itself possibly be valid for these writers. In this indirect but powerful way, Christianity remains normative as a kind of photographic negative against which other traditions are constructed.

III

We turn now to some major examples of pluralistic theology in the work of John Hick, W. C. Smith, and Paul Knitter. All three have played significant roles in bringing religious diversity to the center of theological discussion. Each emphasizes rather different elements of what Panikkar called the modern Western "myth" in their understanding of the religions. In Hick's case, the elements are primarily philosophical, in Smith's primarily historical, and in Knitter's primarily social.

John Hick summarizes his "pluralistic hypothesis" this way. An "infinite Real, in itself beyond the scope of other than purely formal concepts, is differently conceived, experienced, and responded to from within the different cultural ways of being human." The great world faiths then embody correspondingly different responses to the Real from within these variant cultural ways of being human. Within each of them "the transformation of human existence from self-centeredness to Reality-centeredness is taking place" by which humans find ultimate fulfillment.

This hypothesis rules out both arrogance and fallibility at once. No religious tradition can claim its truth or end is better or even different than another's. And, in Hick's highly abstracted vision of religion's bottom line, none can possibly be wrong. Obviously, there is no way to affirm all religion as true unless that statement can be insulated from the denials of modern critical thought, just as a claim that Judaism or Christianity in particular were true would have to be defended. (Of course, were a claim to Christianity's truth to be defended, say, in Thailand, the categories would

be dramatically different.) So in order to affirm the universal validity of religion, it is necessary to put every religion in a defensible form. The character of that form in Hick's case is clear.

Hick's positing of "an infinite Real" as the true referent in all religion, the single Reality on which all religious practitioners are centered, depends for its significance on acceptance of the Kantian world of things in themselves. Hick appeals frequently to those strains in various religious traditions that assert the ineffability of God, or nirvana, or moksha, or Sunyata. But these strains in the traditions generally assert ineffability of their religious referent in contrast to other objects in the world, which can be known as they are. Hick stresses the intrinsic gap between subject and object in all knowing that has marked modern Western philosophy. The Real is an instance of this general principle. Kant's move to sacrifice knowledge to make way for faith has been universalized.

Even mysticism, which is sometimes claimed as an indication of the identical unitive destiny of all religions, is not in Hick's view actual contact with the Real. It remains experience in the categories brought by believers from their historical tradition. The truth of religion then remains the truth of a regulative category that is not in danger of empirical testing. Hick claims it nevertheless has real cognitive content because it is eschatologically falsifiable.

Those familiar with Hick's work will recognize that eschatological verification is a key concept he has developed to defend the meaningfulness of Christian beliefs as truth claims in the face of logical positivist challenges to indicate what differences in experience those beliefs predicted. Here again we see an apologetic strategy developed in the face of modern Western philosophical critiques universalized as a feature of all religion. But do other religions choose to be defined and constituted in these terms? Even in the West, not all Christians by any means have agreed to do so. And are the standards proposed by the analytic philosophical critics in fact universal ones, binding on all, and not themselves conditioned?

It would of course be possible to affirm the salvific effectiveness of varied religions (as some non-pluralistic theologies do) or even to affirm the separate and independent validity of all religions on grounds that were not so insulated from modernity's criticism. For instance, one might affirm this and hold that it implies that the historical events any particular religious tradition deems essential to its life and faith (the death and resurrection of Jesus, the life and career of Muhammad) were actual events of history and took place substantially as believed. That kind of affirmation of the faiths would, however, open itself to possible contradic-

tion. Hick's formulation makes these issues matters of indifference to pluralistic theology's affirmation of, say, Christianity and Islam. He says that "both correct and incorrect trans-historical beliefs, like correct and incorrect historical and scientific beliefs, can form part of a religious totality that mediates the Real to human beings, constituting an effective context within which the salvific process occurs."

The crisis of faith that arose in the modern West in the wake of the Enlightenment had as its primary component the simple encounter with doubt. Rather than living in an environment in which the fundamental validity of a particular religious worldview was largely unquestioned, Christian faith had to be framed in relation to an insistent suggestion that it might be or probably was simply wrong. The pluralism of religions was one of the instruments by which that suggestion was pressed. The vision of religious traditions in Hick's hypothesis is one in which it is no longer possible to doubt any specific religion *per se*. If one is true, all are. In a single swoop, the apologist's task is greatly simplified. One can enter a religious tradition with no concern that any other actual alternatives existed, with the confidence that though there are many and even apparently conflicting religions, that provides no reason to doubt the validity of your own or of religion generally.

The value of the immunities that Hick's theory grants to all religions is directly proportional to how acutely threatening the conditions they ameliorate are felt to be. And this is not necessarily the same in all cultural or religious contexts. To affirm the equality and truth of all religions can be seen from one perspective as an apologetic step that greatly eases the ability to commend religion generically or specifically in the West. Where there is political guilt and a widespread feeling that religious intolerance is a specially Christian vice, the ability to make this statement is highly prized. In those religious traditions where analogous convictions are lacking, there would seem to be little reason for those who have not already accepted the hegemony of Western thought to accept the reconstitution of their own traditions in such terms simply to reach the pluralistic conclusion. This does not mean, of course, that the condemnation of Christian sins cannot be appreciated in its own right. But it does mean that pluralistic theologies still look rather like a consultative mode for doing what is unequivocally Western theology.

We may turn for another example to Wilfred Cantwell Smith. Smith is a particularly interesting case because, following some rather euphoric estimations of modernity early in his career, he has become notable for crusty evaluations of it. Modern rejection of a transcendent realm appears to him a nearly pathological aberration.

The overwhelming majority "of intelligent persons at most times and places, and all cultures other than the recent West, have recognized the transcendent quality of man and the world." At the same time Smith sees this Western world, so oddly parochial in its secularism, as specially gifted with an historical perspective on faith. This perspective is the key to a new view of religion, one that will cast off as anachronistic many assumptions inherited from that right-minded historical consensus he lauds.

The point of departure for Smith's approach to a world theology is his conviction that a certain unity of the world religions already exists. It is the unity of humankind's religious history, the fact that all manner of influences, borrowings, and relations have intertwined the various religious communities throughout their existence. In *Towards a World Theology* (1981), Smith's two delightful illustrations of this are mini-histories of the rosary and of the legend of Barlaam and Josaphat, which latter he traces from its origin as a tale of the Buddha to its effect on Tolstoy as the story of a Christian saint. It is impossible, he suggests, to give a full account of one tradition without tracing the threads that lead to and from others. This truth, he adds, is "newly discovered." It has been revealed by means of the history of religions, that characteristic product of the West and its aberrant anti-transcendent thinking.

As discerned by historical study, religions are constantly shifting processes: hence the inappropriateness of the term "religion" itself. Actually, Smith's discovery about the religions had been well prefigured by some historians' discovery a generation earlier that there was no Christianity as such, only the developing story of different groups within the tradition that had happened to come out on top at different times. The application of this conclusion to Hinduism and other traditions, which had first of all themselves to be constructed as "religions" in a prior phase of the history of religions, does not seem to have required the collaborative evidence of field studies.

The focus for Smith then falls on faith as an existential attitude, a "quiet confidence and joy which enables one to feel at home in the universe and to find meaning in the world and in one's own life, a meaning that is profound and ultimate. . . ." The uncanny resemblance of this attitude, which we are told is the central and universal religious characteristic, to the existential form of Christian faith developed particularly in the Protestant West in the train of Kierkegaard needs little amplification. It arose specifically in relation to the intensive historical consciousness that Smith has adopted as his key to understanding religions, as a form of faith significantly insulated from historical judgments. A gentle internal logic leads

Smith to the discovery that this particular faith is the underlying meaning of all other religious traditions. It would have been inconvenient to discover that any religion's fundamental element was one less well suited to prosper under historical criticism.

Thus where Hick's primary focus is philosophical, Smith's is historical. If Hick stresses the noumenal Real beyond all historical characterization, Smith stresses the existential human response that is appropriate to ultimate "truth-Reality." Modern historical consciousness is the central key to the world theology he sees in the making. No religion can rightly be understood in any other terms. This leads to his famous insistence that "religions" themselves are fictions of abstraction from the flux of history and to his proposal of "faith" as the generic religious reality.

Both Hick and Smith stress religion as relation to the transcendent. Indeed, for both of them, the absolute character of the religious referent's transcendence is crucial. For if this were compromised at all, that referent would come within the range of modernity's criticism and at the same time become describable in some way, which would seem to raise unavoidably the need of discriminating among the religious traditions' characterizations of the object. So while wanting to stress in the strongest possible way the completely conditioned and historical character of all concrete manifestations of religion, they simultaneously need to stress the utter otherness of the Real to which all these projections respond.

Finally, we may consider a quite different version of pluralist theology. Paul Knitter has taken justice and the focus on a thoroughly this-worldly salvation as the key to validity in all religious traditions. Whatever transhistorical referent there may be for any religious tradition is for him a matter than can be left aside to focus on the struggle against poverty and oppression. In this approach, the apologetic dimension perhaps comes through most clearly. In Hick and Smith all religions are implicitly defined into the forms of true religion allowed by modernity. Knitter more straightforwardly says that any religion that does not make the struggle against structural poverty and oppression primary "is not authentic religion" at all, and he has no desire to affirm it.

All religions are true, then, insofar as they exercise a preferential option for the poor and work to eliminate suffering and oppression. Knitter and those with a similar approach are quite aware that a particular definition of "justice" from a single religious tradition or from any combination of traditions may serve the interests of some over others. They therefore see the various religious traditions—the "great world religions" that Hick

and Smith tend to focus on as well as the feminist, liberationist, and other challenging traditions within or outside them—as constituent voices in an ongoing cycle of dialogue and praxis that will serve continually to refine the end being sought. Since no existing ideal is adequate, criteria taken from the various ideal visions of the various religious traditions along with those taken from the agendas of concrete liberation movements must be used to construct a kind of heuristic guide to salvation, an interim definition of justice, to drive the process on. It is around this emerging truth-in-action that the religions and their members should unite.

Clearly, the distinctive feature of this approach is a focus on structural and systemic change that affects the state of poor and oppressed groups, not to be confused with those traditions (or any combination of them) of charity, renunciation, or social transformation that have existed among the religions historically. The religious traditions presupposed premodern social relations and for that reason these pluralists conclude that no dialogue among them or unity of them as they exist can be adequate for human life. Modern awareness of the structural and interdependent character of societies leads to the necessity of interreligious integration, for the problem is too big for any religion alone. The unity of the religions is not a fact but a future accomplishment, to be realized as they bring about what Knitter in Christian language calls “the Kingdom of God.”

The primary sources for this type of pluralistic theology are in the Christian movement of liberation theology, in social liberation movements, and in the Western tradition of social-scientific analysis that undergirds both, including but not limited to Marxist analysis. The need for various faiths to be reconstructed in these terms is stated quite plainly. The equality of the religions resides in the fact that people within them all have and do move toward partial realization of the justice that has been primarily revealed and named through these Western categories. But it is based perhaps most fully in the negative fact that all religions as systems are equally far from fulfilling that justice. However, just as in the “reality-centered” pluralistic theology of Hick the religions are not permitted to differ in their actual definitions of reality, and in Smith’s faith-centered world theology the religions are not permitted to differ in the nature of their faiths, so in this salvation-centered perspective religions that might have a different conviction about what it means to be saved are left aside as inauthentic.

In some respects, Knitter’s is the most straightforward of all pluralist theologies. The vision of social justice that serves as his norm does not need to wait upon interreligious conversation for its validity to be assured. It is true that it cannot be

fulfilled without the assistance of those of all faiths, and he is more than open to receive complementary perspectives from traditions that will extend or revise the dimensions of the justice he already seeks. But he will accept no changing of the subject. And he is frank to say that he has no time, not even time to dialogue, for those who simply do not see what true religion is and demands. So long as all these certainties are in no way explicitly Christian, Knitter seems to feel he can impose them on his religious neighbors with untroubled conscience.

IV

As theorists of artificial intelligence work with various procedures for computer translation between languages, some opt for the use of a “middle language.” In such a program, the sentences from Swahili are first translated into an artificial language or symbol system and then from that structure into French or any other tongue. The advantages of such an approach are obvious: rather than working out specific terms for translating each language into every other language, it is only necessary to work out a program that takes each language into and out of the middle language. For pluralistic theologies, modern critiques of religion constitute a kind of middle language. In their approaches, the central elements or dynamics of each religious tradition must be able to go into the terms demanded by such critiques and then come out again intact in the equivalent forms of another religious tradition.

It is not surprising that when these authors aimed to affirm the vitality and validity of the great religious traditions of the world, they would interpret “affirm” in categories drawn from their particular religious and cultural setting: in this case, one not only in the Christian modern West but predominantly one within the academic world. To affirm other religions as true and efficacious meant to put them in such terms as could plausibly claim those titles according to the canons operative in that context. This would not be so serious a defect had these writers not insisted so vehemently that it is illegitimate to apply universally standards that stem from a particular location.

Pluralistic theologies have struggled conscientiously to avoid imposing explicit Christian categories on other religions. But it seems obvious that they have enthusiastically made normative, in the negative as it were, modern Western views on true religion. To their credit, they have taken the brute fact of multiple religious traditions with utter seriousness. But the philosophies, the theologies, the views of history, the social thought of these other traditions and their societies are, rather contrary to general pluralist principles, hardly taken seriously

at all. The religions are accepted as salvific options. Yet they are not even considered as the sources of alternative fundamental categories for approaching religious diversity itself, alternative to those of modern Western critical philosophy, understandings of historical process, and standards for justice.

One would suppose that the pluralistic ranks would be enriched by entries that took as the central categories for defining and interpreting religions those shaped by forces other than Christianity and the Enlightenment and that contrast with the accepted norms of Western modernity. This would give us examples of how our own faiths and our own current cultural norms would need to look if recast to count as "true religion" on someone else's terms, to balance against these numerous examples of how the other traditions are recast to count as true religion on ours.

There is a great deal of discussion today about "postmodernity" and about the possible transformations that may follow the dethroning of North Atlantic views of history, knowledge, and justice from their supposed universal status through a recognition of valid alternatives from other cultures. Insofar as such a transformation were actually to take place, pluralistic theologies would seem to be among the most likely casualties, defensively structured as they are around the presumed universality of these modern Western categories. Ironically, these antidotes to Christian particularism may prove to be much more culture and time bound than the theologies they condemn, and the very religious traditions they wish to affirm may find on the whole they have no less to fear from the pluralists' embrace than the exclusivist's confrontation. □

Christ, Culture & the New Europe

Rémi Brague

The Synod of European bishops that took place in Rome last year engaged a wide range of topics. Nevertheless both the meetings and the press coverage of them kept returning to a single theme, that is, the re-evangelization of European culture.

While some people find in this idea a fascinating plan of action, there are many others who shudder at the thought. And little wonder, given the account of this effort offered by the journalists. Does the Pope—the suggestion is there—plan a Catholic reconquest of Europe? And will Europe then fall prey to a new Roman conspiracy? Who is pulling the strings? There are indeed rumors of certain recent Catholic movements, looming more powerful and blacker in popular fantasy than the Jesuits used to do. In *The Communist Manifesto* Marx declared that Communism was a specter haunting Europe. Now that it has become merely ghostly, many Europeans in search of conspiracy might be swapping Communism for a kind of old-new surrogate, i.e. popery. The question is: whether dream or nightmare, will Christianity, particularly in the guise of Roman Catholicism, actually conquer Europe?

Paradoxically, when it comes to this “new evangelization,” those who are sanguine and those who fear it are not neatly divided along lines of membership and non-membership in the Roman Catholic Church. In Eastern Europe, for example, among the victims of Communist rule, including not only non-Catholic Christians but even unbelievers, the values preached in the Gospel—truth, justice, etc.—remained down through the years a vision of possibility to cling to. At least thus far people of all stripes remember with gratitude the

important part played by the churches, and especially by the Polish Pope, in the final overthrow of Communism. When Communism was the main enemy, the old rivalry among the various denominations was seen to be largely irrelevant, or at least a kind of side issue. And the Pope himself has never set his idea of a new evangelization in opposition to the Church’s effort at dialogue and reconciliation both among Christian denominations and between Christians and non-Christians.

I myself was privileged to witness some of all this at first hand in late October of 1991, when I was invited by the Pontifical Council for Culture to take part in a symposium of European intellectuals that was meant to offer the bishops of the Synod food for thought. Among the forty people present—almost all of them lay men and women—fewer than ten came from the countries of Western Europe. Most of those present were from the former Soviet Union or from Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, etc. It is interesting for Western Europeans to note that the term “Eastern Europe” was deeply frowned upon by the participants from these latter countries, who insisted instead on “Central Europe.” The very idea of an Eastern Europe, they said, was one more lie of Soviet propaganda, used to justify the Red Army’s artificial division of Europe into East and West. The “Church of silence” could be heard again, and the first thing it had to tell us was that it had never been completely gagged and that we, Western Christians, had too often and for too long been a Church of deafness. And the Pope was clearly eager to see the reintegration of Europe’s Eastern and Central parts.

In addition, we Westerners were reminded of a few basic historic facts. We were reminded, for instance, that Prague is almost as “western” as Berlin, and more so than Vienna or Stockholm. We had to learn once again that it had been the capital

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of the Holy Roman Empire, and that it harbored Europe's first university. We were invited to bear in mind that our intellectuals frequently helped to throw people living under Communist rule into despair by playing footsie with Marxist ideology while they one after another hallowed each new earthly paradise it was giving birth to. As a Frenchman, I experienced a vicarious embarrassment about my country's role in the post-World War I creation of Czechoslovakia and, even worse, Yugoslavia. These completely artificial states, welding together peoples who had either never lived together or had not done so for centuries—people whose religions, languages, histories, and levels of economic and social development were widely disparate—are the result of the shortsightedness of politicians who were by and large my fellow countrymen.

Beyond this, it appeared that the Church may be the only place that exists at present where all European peoples—including even Serbs and Croats—can speak to one another. The most extraordinary thing about the dialogues that took place both in and out of official sessions was not their content, but who took part in them and how. People were exchanging private reminiscences, but at the same time whole peoples were sharing their respective memories. We too often restrict to the material sphere the commandment to share our goods. We have to share with others not only our wealth or technological know-how; we have to share our pasts as well.

What makes this task difficult is that memories of European peoples are poisoned with the recollections of wrongs done to and suffered by one another. If some way is not found to heal these wounds, everywhere in Europe and in the former USSR, they will fester and keep alive the longing for vengeance. An example of this, of course, is the late Yugoslavia, where allegedly "ex"-Communist leaders are reopening old wounds and flattering Serbian nationalism for their own purposes.

Forgiveness, then, turns out to be more than a theme for sermons. In Europe in any case, and likely even in the world at large, forgiving one another is by far the most real and concrete of all political programs. If we want peace, historic wounds must be healed. Can they be? In order to answer this question, we have to realize that forgiveness is basically a religious idea. It begins with faith: we first have to believe, in the teeth of all evidence to the contrary, that reconciliation is possible, that both we and our enemy can change our hearts.

As a Frenchman, once again, I was deeply surprised and at the same time touched by the way in which, for instance, Croatians and Slovaks considered the current friendship between my country and its eastern neighbor, Germany, as an example of what can be achieved between former "hereditary foes," and as a ground for hope.

Now, it is a historic fact that the reconciliation among France, Germany, and Italy was the work of three Christian statesmen: Karl Adenauer, Robert Schuman, and Alcide de Gasperi. Nor were these men people who simply happened to be Christians. Their policy, at least in the field of European cooperation, was a direct consequence of their Christian ethics. The first seed of the European Economic Community, i.e., the 1954 European Coal and Steel Company, was not sown for economic reasons only, but—and this was very conscious on the mind of its father, another Christian, Jean Monnet—in order to prevent competition about the possession of these basic industrial goods from becoming once again the cause of wars. What prevailed was not the will to economic power, but the desire for peace and its condition.

What the Pope and leaders of the Church like Cardinal Ratzinger or Cardinal Lustiger of Paris have in mind when they speak of a new evangelization are realities of this kind: a common healing of memories, reconciliation, and mutual help among European peoples—and certainly not some dark conspiracy aimed at wielding political power or influence.

On the other hand, just as many non-Christians gladly welcome the idea of giving more weight to the values preached in the Gospels, Roman Catholics strongly object to any interpretation of the idea of a "new evangelization" in terms of "conquest" or "reconquista." The idea arises, rather, from accepting for oneself the obligation of remembrance and repentance—which in turn requires taking a fresh look at history. If there is to be a "new" evangelization, we first have to ask ourselves questions about the "old" one. Now, this first evangelization, in the early centuries of our era, took place slowly and peacefully. It proceeded *against* the political power of the Roman Empire. Thus referring to the idea of evangelization amounts from the outset to excluding the dream of seizing power. In calling for a new evangelization, the Pope precisely chose as a model what happened before Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, in other words, before it could even be tempted to impose its creed by means of political coercion.

Moreover, evangelization does not mean Christianization. To evangelize, in good English, or, to be exact, in good Greek, amounts to proclaim the Gospel. How people react is another story. As for the past, historians know very well that the Christianization of Europe has never been totally completed. There never was such thing as a "Christendom" that was coextensive with Europe. History has long given the lie to Novalis' romantic vision. First, Jewish communities resisted and have continued to do so up to the present time; and

among the Christians themselves, many areas of life, public and private, were never really Christianized and remained more or less heathen. The “nominal Christian” is not an invention of modern times.

As for the present, is the idea of new evangelization a sign of the totalitarian character of the Roman Church, if not of Christianity as a whole? Historical instances of totalitarian behavior among Christian believers and/or institutions cannot settle the matter, because such instances cannot be proven to reach to the core of the Christian message or necessarily to follow from it. Still, the question remains: is Christianity totalitarian in nature? The question cannot be brushed aside.

Facing it squarely, I think, would lead to the answer that, to some extent, it is true that even in the purest form we can conceive, Christianity is and remains a totalitarianism of sorts. But it is so in a most Pickwickian sense. It does, to be sure, claim to recapitulate the totality of human experience in time and space, and to pervade humankind in the totality of its dimensions. But at the same time Christianity is anything but a totalitarian *power*. For it does the contrary of what totalitarian rulers commonly do.

As a rule, totalitarianism endeavors to do away with the individual subject: his thought is replaced by ideology, his speech is replaced by some dialectical variety of Newspeak, his actions are replaced by the automatic development of Progress, History, or class struggle, supervised by the State or the Party—which, thanks to its “hundreds of eyes” (Brecht, *Die Massnahme*), is supposed to be wiser and more farsighted than any one of us. In this way, classical totalitarianism muffles moral conscience and makes the burden of individual responsibility lighter. And this may be pleasant, as Hitler once suggested to Rauschning.

Christianity, on the other hand, to the extent that it is so, is a totalitarianism of the moral subject. In this paradoxical totalitarianism, the responsibility of the subject is enhanced beyond all limits. No dimension of life can escape it. There is a Christian way of behaving, hence of doing everything. No dimension of my life can dodge the ethical claim, because I am always present in what I do or in what happens to me. I am myself totally, that which I have to do should be done by myself and not by anybody else, that which I must undergo will happen to myself and to nobody else.

Yet there is no such thing as a Christian method, or code, or set of rules that would apply to the whole realm of human life in order to tell us at each step what is the proper way to do things. There is a Christian behavior towards oneself, but Christianity will not tell you whether you should sleep on your back or on your stomach, or with which hand you should bathe yourself. There is a Christian

way of playing one’s part on the political scene, but there is no Christian politics, let alone a specifically Christian policy applicable to any given case. There is a Christian attitude towards man as a fellow citizen, but no Christian law.

This can be shown historically. Take an example from the law. In late Antiquity, Roman law was influenced by few Christian ideas. As a matter of fact, the only point on which this influence can be assessed with some certainty was the legislation on slavery. Apart from that, Christianity left Roman law where it stood. As long as no basic ethical rule was broken, there was no reason for meddling. The same holds true for the world of today: as long as a system of law abides by the basic human rights that bear no exception, there is no reason for interference by the Church.

Such an attitude finds its roots in the founding texts of the New Testament. Everybody knows the celebrated passage distinguishing those things owed respectively to God and Caesar (Matthew 22:21 and parallels). But there is a proviso: Jesus does not in fact draw a precise line between the spheres of God and of Caesar; indeed, there is no such thing as a realm of Caesar, existing as an independent reality, for Caesar himself has to answer before God for what he does.

A second example is perhaps more significant. In the Gospel according to Luke (12:13-15), we are told that someone has asked Jesus to compel his brother to share with him what their father had bequeathed to them. Jesus refuses to interfere: he was not sent to act as a justice of the peace. Instead of deciding for or against one of the two brothers, he warns people, in a general way, against cupidity. Jesus displaces the whole issue from the juridical to the moral level. Laying down rules, about inheritance or anything at all, is no part of Jesus’ business. This does not mean that rules should be discarded, or replaced by some enthusiastic effusion that would abolish private property. Technical rules must be kept and even improved and refined. This only means that all existing rules have to measure up to a moral standard. Furthermore, this moral standard can help us find better rules. The above little story nips in the bud the very possibility of a Christian religious law, of a Christian *Shari’a*. This is all the more striking as—what Luke could not foresee—the rules on inheritance were to become one of the trickiest and most developed in Islamic religious law, a nest of case studies for students of legal theory.

Therefore, the modern demand of a separation between the religious realm and the way in which societies organize themselves does scarcely more than remind us of one of the fundamental principles of Christianity. In the course of history, especially in post-Reformation times, Christians sometimes yielded to the temptation to forget this. Modern

democratic societies had to refresh their memories by insisting on the separation, and, from time to time, they did so in opposition to the Church. Nevertheless, these societies were proving to be perfectly legitimate and faithful heirs of Christianity.

As for our present problem, a re-evangelization of European culture does not mean retracing one's steps towards a new union of political and religious powers, for the simple reason that such a union never existed.

It would be well at this point to ask a few fundamental questions about the relationship between Christianity and Europe. Obviously Christianity has played, and may continue to play, an important part in European culture—an observation as much harped upon, for good and ill, as it is self-evident. At the very beginning of European history, Christianity was instrumental in the process of integrating newcomers to what was, and remained, the Roman world. Barbarian tribes were simultaneously baptized and settled: sharing a common faith furthered intermarriage and integration. Yet this bare historical fact says nothing to the issue of whether what happened was or was not legitimate. As Hume taught us centuries ago, no “ought” can be legitimately deduced from an “is.” So it is a matter of plain fact that Christianity molded what came to be called Europe (whose original name, after all, was “Christendom”), but to say so does not by itself tell us whether that shaping of European culture through the medium of Christian ideas was a good thing or a bad thing to begin with, let alone whether those ideas speak to us now.

Let us put the question in a different way. When we speak of Christianity, and of its importance to European cultural history, we commonly assume that Christianity belongs to European culture, that it is a part of that culture, an element among other elements: e.g., Jewish ethics, Greek democracy and philosophy, pagan sacrality, Roman law and organization, not to mention the customs of the Germanic, Slavic, and Hungarian tribes who were invaders. Why, then, we might ask, should the Christian element be given a place of honor? There might, after all, have been other cultural syntheses than the one that did in fact develop.

But this way of framing the issue is misleading. For while Christianity did contribute its mite to the formation of Europe, it did so in quite a peculiar way. The formative elements, or roots, of European thought are commonly referred to as Greek rationality on the one side and the faith of Israel on the other. For the most part, this story is a “tale of two cities”: Athens and Jerusalem. Is Christianity, then, to be thought of as a third root? Should a third city, Rome, be added to the tale? The answer is that

we ought not to think of Rome, and of Christianity—which is far more deeply “Roman” than is commonly surmised—as being some third element in European culture. Nor should we think of it as the synthesis of Athens and Jerusalem in an encompassing whole. Christianity is in fact the *common structure* of our relationship to both sources.

Ponder for a moment the peculiar character of European cultural history. One way of describing it is as a long series of renaissances. The concept of renaissance came into use in connection with what was believed or expected to take place in late medieval Italy. The rediscovery of the classics was supposed by people like Petrarch to bring to a close what was called (by Petrarch himself) the “dark ages.” Now, the historians have destroyed the legend of the “dark ages” and shown that the renaissance—or as I have called it, renaissances—never actually began or ended. They first spoke of a “renaissance of the twelfth century” (C. H. Haskins), then discovered an earlier one in the ninth century. On the other hand, the series of Italian renaissances was furthered by the French and German classicist movement, and by the nostalgic passion for Greece among the German and English romantic poets, not to speak of the more recent attempts by Nietzsche, and into our time, Heidegger, Leo Strauss, and others.

What is a renaissance? Basically, a new way of looking at old texts or works of art, grounded in a sense of inferiority vis-à-vis what the Ancients achieved in science and the arts. Seeing oneself as a barbarian or decadent results in the determination to go back to the original masterpieces that lay buried under dust or rust, to remove what marred their radiance, and to live up to them. In most cases what was covering the original masterpieces were the remnants of former attempts at retrieving their original meaning. For instance, the Italian renaissance tried to recover the genuine Aristotle. And it did so through a criticism of scholasticism—that is, of a previous reading of Aristotle.

A claim to the legacy of Greece could be found in civilizations that did not view themselves as European or even having something in common with Europe, i.e., Islam and Byzantium. A wide-ranging effort at translating Greek texts was made by the Arabic-speaking world in the ninth century. Byzantium, for its part, never completely cast off from its moorings in ancient Greece and always kept, at least in educated circles, the classical form of written language.

Yet there was something unique to Europe, which was that, strictly speaking, renaissances occurred there and nowhere else. In particular, there were no renaissances in the Byzantine or in the Islamized worlds. Byzantium remained proud of speak-

ing still the language of Homer and Plato. The Arabic-speaking world produced a great number of translations, but did not keep the original texts. Since Arabic, as the language of the Koran, therefore of God himself, was considered as the most perfect language, it superseded and replaced other languages (Greek, Syriac, Coptic, etc.) that were spoken before the Muslim conquest. Consequently, the Arabic-speaking world did not receive what could not be translated and had to be read in the original, namely, poetry, epics, drama. Europe, unlike Byzantium, never thought of itself as the legitimate heir of classical culture. Its educated circles, who spoke Latin, never shed their feeling of estrangement vis-à-vis the Greeks: to them, ancient culture was irretrievably lost. And unlike the Islamicized world, Europe kept the original texts that testified to its inferiority and never tried to do without them.

Now, this corresponds to a structure that exists in the religious sphere as well. Christianity is grounded in the experience that the people of Israel had with God under the Old Covenant. It claims to be a fresh way of looking at this experience and of synthesizing it in the light of the life, teaching, passion, and resurrection of Jesus. The Christian Bible unites in an inseparable whole the New Testament and what becomes the Old Testament. For the Christians, "old" does not mean obsolete. On the contrary, the Old Testament still keeps its permanent value.

Such an attitude is difficult. It would be far easier simply to do away with the old covenant. This is precisely what the heresiarch Marcion, in the second century, proposed to do. The Church Fathers resisted the attempt at parting from the Old Testament and chose the more difficult way: keeping it and interpreting it as more or less clearly pointing to its fulfillment in Jesus. Islam, on the other hand, chose to reject the texts of both the Old and New Testaments. According to the Koran, their texts were tampered with by Jews and Christians who were unwilling to admit that they announced the final coming of Muhammad, as the seal of all prophecy. Their authentic content, fortunately, is to be read in clear Arabic in the Koran itself, so that Islam can dispense with reading the sacred books of former revelations.

Thus, a very peculiar attitude towards the past underlies the way in which European culture relates to the sources from which it springs. The dominant pattern is the same for both Jewish and Greek. European culture always resisted the temptation to absorb in itself what it had inherited from either the Greeks or the Jews—to suck in the content

and to throw away the empty husk. It always maintained the lively, even painful, consciousness of its being secondary vis-à-vis classical culture and the old covenant. And it could do so because accepting secondarity stemmed from the deepest layer, or, to change metaphors, the peak of its culture, i.e., its religion.

This is the reason why historic Christianity, in the long run, always granted a place to other cultural traditions: paganism survived in law; its mythology enjoyed a series of rebirths in art. Christianity can't help doing that, for in its innermost structure it is rooted in something that it is not, i.e., Judaism. Thus, Christianity is not an element among others in European culture, but its very form, the form that enables it to remain open to whatever can come from the outside and enrich the hoard of its experiences with the human and the divine.

That is why my own guess for the future is that Christianity will be able to play a positive role on the European stage if, and only if, it gets rid of the temptation to repudiate its Jewish roots. It might be that the deepest issue at stake in the new evangelization has to do with the Church's attempt at a reconciliation with the Jews.

The idea of a new evangelization, then, should be carefully distinguished from some dream of Christendom, the temptation to seek the conquest of European culture. An unbiased look at what the Catholic Church actually says and does through its official statements—to be distinguished from distorted and/or unauthorized reports—should suffice to dispel fears and resentment on that matter.

Moreover, the idea of such a conquest does not tally with what the Catholic Church has always considered to be its role. At least at the level of principle, principle never eschewed, it has always acknowledged both the freedom for temporal affairs to be self-regulating and the right for itself to keep a critical outlook on them and to assess moral, political, and economic practice from the point of view of ethics.

Finally, endeavoring to make the Christian message more conspicuous is not parochial. We do not have to ask, if we are Christian, what place we can leave to other trends of culture or, if we are not, what place will be left for us. On the contrary, Christianity has enabled the other trends of European culture to remain what they are and to develop themselves. If this culture wants to survive and to keep drawing on its two sources, it should be careful to help Christians towards a better understanding of their own cultural mission. [F]

Books In Review

Baby Talk

LIFE ITSELF: ABORTION IN THE AMERICAN MIND. By ROGER ROSENBLATT. Random House. 194 pp. \$20.

Reviewed by Elizabeth Kristol

ROGER ROSENBLATT wants you to know that he has solved the abortion problem. Really. He's written a whole book about it called *Life Itself*. Of course, the middle third of the book is just a summary of other people's research on the history of abortion from the beginning of time, and there is one section at the back describing the results of some opinion polls and another section listing lots of books about abortion (although Rosenblatt doesn't actually discuss any of them). But altogether the book is nearly 200 pages long, so you know it must have some answers.

Rosenblatt also wants you to know that he has *actually talked to other people* about the subject of abortion. Most Americans, he claims, have not. The premise of *Life Itself* is that Americans never "talk," "argue," or "speak" about abortion; nor do they "say what they feel" or "express" or "discuss" their views. "Abortion has existed mainly as a shouting match that had been overheard by ordinary people." For Rosenblatt, this revelation explains why, "in spite of the fact that most Americans want choice, the right to choose is at greater risk than before." The "vast silence" of most Americans "puts the majority at risk of living in an America that inaccurately represents them on this issue."

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More likely Rosenblatt hears a "vast silence" because he is a bad listener. That he is a snob as well becomes clear when he tries to interview "ordinary" Americans in an attempt to learn "where we are on abortion." It turns out that this ambitious project doesn't take nearly as much traveling as you would think. Rosenblatt just boards a plane in New York City and heads out to Iowa, since "Iowa has always been an especially good place for getting at the heart of what the country is thinking." The Iowans Rosenblatt spoke to "spoke for the country." He knows this because Iowa has a river on either side of it, and the 42nd parallel runs right through it, so you can tell it is Middle America. Also, when you fly over the state you can see that it is divided up into lots of little squares, "as if to emphasize its solidity." And "roads run either horizontally or vertically; there are no short cuts in Iowa."

THERE ARE other telltale signs that Iowa is full of ordinary Americans. It has state fairs (Rosenblatt says there was even a cow-chip toss going on while he was there) and people dress badly (he says one woman he met was wearing silver nail polish). Everyone he interviewed seemed eager to talk with him about this very serious topic of abortion, although Rosenblatt points out that it wasn't until they sat down to chat with him that they became aware of what they actually thought and felt about the subject.

After talking to Iowans—fifty of them!—and some other people he already knew like Peter Jennings, Garry Trudeau, Jane Pauley, Jim Lehrer, Martin Peretz, and Derek Bok, Rosenblatt concludes that America is pro-choice. But not pro-choice in some *simplistic* way. What Americans really want is for abortion to be *permitted but discouraged*. Although this notion is presented as the breakthrough solution to the age-old abortion controversy, Rosenblatt is very vague about what his formula actually entails. By piecing together scat-

tered references in the book, though, we learn that "discouraging" abortion means working toward broad societal changes that would make abortion unnecessary. For example, discouragement "may be effected by things as specific as sex education and the introduction of improved contraceptives such as Norplant and by things as general as increased attention to the poor and to family structure and discipline." Of course, we should be careful not to deter or restrict or limit or inhibit a woman's access to abortion in any way. In fact, abortions should be federally funded. A woman's right to choice, after all, is absolute.

Rosenblatt's reluctance to clarify his terms serves him well, especially when he is talking with people who use words far more conventionally than he does. Rosenblatt blithely quotes people on both sides of the issue who favor limits on abortion, but he glosses over those comments, preferring to focus on the fact that most people agreed that restrictive measures would have a hard time getting through their legislature. And he boasts that both the pro-choice and pro-life individuals he interviewed "spoke unprovoked of creating social remedies that would keep the need for abortion down." That must mean they agree with his permit-but-discourage formula! Having convinced himself that he is very much in touch with ordinary Americans, Rosenblatt pats his Iowans on the head for holding "a secret that, once revealed, could do everyone considerable good."

BUT IF IT turns out there is so much room for accommodation on the abortion issue, why is the subject still so confrontational? Rosenblatt dismisses out of hand the possibility that the tension could center on the status of the fetus. Talking about fetuses, he says, is a misguided attempt to "impose objective precision on a subjective area of speculation"; it is neither "pertinent" nor "useful" to the abortion debate to discuss when life begins. Sociological, not substantive, rea-

sons must account for Americans' discomfort with the issue. Rosenblatt concludes that we are in conflict because we have many cultural strains pulling us in different directions.

For example, the intrepid *Life* magazine reporter reveals that America has a "secret, undercurrent religion," a "hidden national feeling about faith and God." In fact, a historian named Perry Miller says that America has been this way since colonial times. Americans are also very individualistic (Perry Miller says this goes back to colonial times, too), which means that we like to make our own decisions. And America is very puritanical (Rosenblatt himself traces this back to colonial times), which is why we hate all expressions of sexuality and see abortion as a symbol of sex. Also, the American nation "began like an orphan" and went on to become the "world's most powerful baby, like Gargantua." This sense of being "the child alone" may explain why Americans have such powerful emotions about things having to do with babies. There are lots of other sociological factors, too.

No wonder we are so confused about abortion. But confusion isn't necessarily bad, Rosenblatt tells us. We get into trouble only when we try to reconcile our jumbled thoughts and feelings instead of just treating abortion "as one of our normal unresolvable problems." We shouldn't run from our confused feelings. Rosenblatt has even noticed that "the more significant the problem, the less adamant honest thinkers will be in considering it." Abortion certainly fits this bill: it is "too significant a problem to admit adamancy on either side." Most people don't realize that outlawing abortion would trivialize life: A "society in which abortion is permitted and its gravity appreciated . . . takes life with utmost seriousness and is, by the depth of its conflicts and by the richness of its difficulties, a reflection of life itself."

The implication of *Life Itself* is

that if everybody on both sides of the abortion debate had the same opportunity to talk to Rosenblatt as the lucky residents of Iowa did, they would soon discover that their strongly held views were founded on sand and that they share a fundamental ambivalence. The irony, says Rosenblatt, is that "we are closer in our thinking on abortion than the politics would indicate, but as yet we seem unable to live with the ambivalence the problem requires." If only we could be more like Mario Cuomo, "one of the few major politicians in the country with an articulated and sophisticated position on abortion." Yet Rosenblatt laments that even Cuomo's courage falls short since he "has spoken more in defense of his own personal ambivalence than as a leader urging the benefits of ambivalence on his countrymen." We need to realize that people actually become more moral by learning to live with ambivalence. Rosenblatt hastens to assure us that "bifurcated thinking" isn't namby-pamby or un-American: "acknowledging and living with ambivalence is, in a way, what America was invented to do."

ROSENBLATT also explains that people who have learned to express themselves on the subject of abortion know that the issue really boils down to communication. Because it is so important to share our thoughts and feelings on abortion, Rosenblatt recommends that Congress pass a law like *Roe v. Wade*, "but only after people had had the chance to hear what others thought and, more importantly, to discover what they themselves thought." Our thoughts and feelings could even be worked into the new law: "It would be heartening to see wording attached that conveyed the range and complexity of feelings on the issue, that acknowledged that abortion is the taking of life at some stage, and that voiced the concern of the country that the best antidote to abortion is to make it less necessary."

But Congress should be sure to

pass a law like *Roe v. Wade*, says Rosenblatt, because it would be terrible if the issue were left up to the states. After the *Webster* decision there was hardly any communication at all: "Instead of discussion, the states responded with one set of laws or another." Worse, if *Roe* were overturned, some states might go ahead and outlaw or restrict abortion, even though America is overwhelmingly pro-choice. These things happen. Besides, adds Rosenblatt, "abortion is the whole country's problem, and it will only be messed up further than it already has been if each state, an odd political unit in any case, appoints itself as a separate moral authority."

Having tackled the complicated issue of federalism, Rosenblatt moves on to larger questions of democracy. Really irritating minorities should stop being so divisive. Those who oppose abortion are a "distinct minority," says Rosenblatt, and they should begin to act like one. Rosenblatt (a man old enough to have lived through the civil rights movement) explains that the opponents of abortion "bear a responsibility toward the country and its form of government to behave like a minority—that is, to oppose the majority without destroying the country until or unless their position eventually prevails." Better still, both sides on the issue could start working together "toward creating a country where everyone had the same health care, the same sex education, the same opportunity for economic survival, the same sense of personal dignity and worth. . . ."

Rosenblatt's book has a happy ending:

Picture the two combatants laying down their signs and slogans and staring at each other with sympathetic curiosity. They begin to ask questions of each other. They listen to the answers. Slowly, awkwardly, they detect grounds of agreement. They occupy those grounds. From time to time they argue, and

often they gaze separately into the distance with an imponderable helplessness. Yet they do not quit each other's company. And eventually they touch, surprised to discover that they were always within reach.

Thus both sides can finally embrace Rosenblatt's compromise solution: on the one hand, permit abortion; on the other hand, federally fund it.

Mystery and Desire

MARIETTE IN ECSTASY. By RON HANSEN. HarperCollins. 179 pp. \$20.

Reviewed by Gregory Wolfe

RON HANSEN'S *Mariette in Ecstasy* is a haunting, enigmatic novel that is almost impossible to categorize, and it represents a radical departure from Hansen's previous work. His first two novels, *Desperadoes* and *The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford*, are inventive retellings of myths of the American West. His collection of short stories, *Nebraska*, won an award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

What makes *Mariette* especially fascinating is that it deals with a subject that must appear esoteric and bizarre to today's reading public. Set in a Benedictine convent in upstate New York at the turn of the century, it is the story of a young girl who experiences the stigmata, the five wounds of Christ, in her own flesh. The cloistered world of these thoroughly pre-Vatican II nuns, with their rigid rules, harshly penitential disciplines, and permanent, world-denying vows, must seem more alien to contemporary readers than the futuristic realms of most science fiction novels.

Given the remoteness and "abnormality" of this world, the expectations and preconceptions of

the reader undoubtedly play an important role in how the story is perceived. There is, of course, a long and undistinguished tradition of lurid, melodramatic tales of masochism and smoldering sexuality in the monastic enclosure. The genre, which probably began with Boccaccio's *Decameron*, moves on to nineteenth-century anti-Catholic novels such as *The White Cowl*

to contemporary psychological fables such as the film *Agnes of God*. The publisher's promotional material appears to build on the expectations associated with this sort of story, describing *Mariette in Ecstasy* as "a powerful portrayal of the disturbing world beneath the placid daily life of an American convent."

But if Hansen works with some

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GREGORY WOLFE is the editor of *Image: A Journal of the Arts and Religion*.

of the same materials, he has fashioned an altogether more serious and profound exploration of suffering and religious passion.

The novel's form mimics the ordered time of the monastic day and the Christian year, an order that creates a backdrop of timelessness not unlike the patterned backgrounds in medieval illuminated manuscripts. The headings of each short section are from a saint's day or memorial in the Church calendar. Brief scenes fade in and out, ranging from lyrical vignettes to nightmarish visions. The natural world, with its varying moods, its meaningful silences and latent violence, provides a continuous counterpoint to the novel's action.

IN ADDITION, the narrative abounds in rich, sensuous descriptions that

are central to the novel's meaning. Living as we do in a more sterilized and abstracted world of steel, plastic, and fiberglass, the organic, tactile immediacy of the world Hansen depicts is arresting. In that time and place, things were more easily understood as sacramental; the physical and the metaphysical existed in close proximity.

Troughs of sunlight angle into the oratory like green and pink bolts of cloth grandly flung down from the high, painted windows. Still present are the wood oil smells and habit starch and an incense of styrax and cascarilla bark. Mother Céline and her postulant genuflect together and Mariette's right knee touches down on a great red

Persian carpet that seems as warm as a sleeping cat. She sees faint gyres of dust in the hot upper air.

The daily life of the convent is a mixture of the familiar and unfamiliar, of common sense and the seemingly irrational, of sanctity and gnawing discontent. The penitential practices of the nuns can run to the extreme. "Tightly sashed around [Mother Saint Raphael's] stomach just below the great green-veined bowls of her breasts are cuttings from the French garden's rosebushes, the dark thorns sticking into skin that is scarlet with infection." However harsh these mortifications may be, they do not create grotesque fanatics. Mother Saint Raphael is a humorless, autocratic superior, but she is also shrewd, practical, and painfully aware of her own failings.

For Hansen the convent, despite its austerity and isolation, is just as complicated as the world outside. It is a form of life that involves an intensified struggle with the self and its "devices and desires." If the Seven Deadly Sins continue to assault the nuns, the convent, as a spiritual battleground, is a place that demands our respect.

The novel's protagonist, Mariette Baptiste, is the daughter of a possessive, hyper-masculine father (her mother died when she was young). Mariette is an intelligent and strikingly beautiful seventeen-year-old when she enters the convent. She is the type of woman who would cause jealousy, envy, and adoration anywhere she went, including the monastic enclosure.

Rather than using her intelligence and beauty in the more conventional modes of academic achievement and marriage, Mariette withdraws into an intense inner life. She becomes a spiritual prodigy. All of her sensual energy and vivid imagination is channeled into her courtship with her divine lover, Jesus.

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Ideas for post-secular America

Within her first year in the convent, Mariette experiences the trauma of seeing her sister, who is also a nun, killed by cancer at the age of 37. She undergoes a spiritual crisis in which she loses any sense of Christ's presence. Then, in the midst of this agitation, the stigmata appear on her body; she bleeds from hands, feet, and torso.

When questioned, Mariette claims that the stigmata were given to her by Christ Himself. It becomes clear that, far from being proud and ostentatious about these wounds, Mariette is embarrassed and troubled. The convent is thrown into a turmoil of conflicting opinions and emotional responses.

Here is a subject that is perfectly suited for Freudian analysis. If there was ever a paradigm of repressed sexuality, the apparently masochistic mysticism of the female religious would seem to be it. And yet Ron Hansen's novel makes no attempt to *explain* Mariette's experiences; there is no sense in which the author stands above and outside his protagonist's life, ready to share a knowing look with his reader about this sadly deluded girl. The story is open-ended, allowing the reader to interpret Mariette's experience in any number of ways. That is exactly what happens in the convent, where almost every possible reaction, from adoration to loathing and fear, is evoked by Mariette's stigmata.

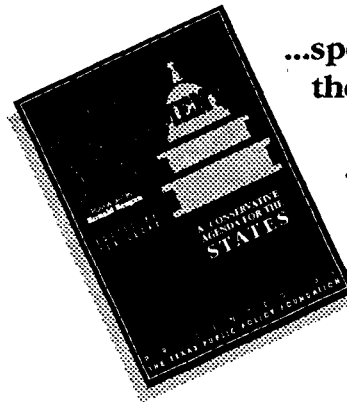
The open-endedness of the narrative is not a cop-out, but a sign of Hansen's respect for mystery, that dimension of the Christian imagination championed by Flannery O'Connor. For the writer who acknowledges mystery, O'Connor held, "the meaning of a story does not begin except at a depth where adequate motivation and adequate psychology and the various determinations have been exhausted. Such a writer will be interested in what we don't understand rather than in what we do. . . . He will be interested in characters who are forced out to meet evil and grace and who act on a trust beyond themselves—whether they know

very clearly what it is they act upon or not."

O'Connor's words describe not only Hansen's vision but also his protagonist's significance. The modern reader, consciously or unconsciously schooled by Freud, will note the eroticism of Mariette's spirituality and be tempted to think that in 1906 repressed sexuality led to religious hallucinations. But Hansen's narrative also takes into account the tradition, from the Song of Songs through Carmelite mysticism, of Eros as a metaphor for the soul's relation to the

heavenly bridegroom.

THE FINAL level of ambiguity in the novel concerns the perceptions of those who must interpret Mariette's ecstasies. These perceptions are colored by the characters' deepest hopes, fears, and needs. Mariette's stigmata, like any intense and miraculous religious experience, act as a touchstone, revealing the inner lives of those around her. Though such revelations include jealousy, credulity, and anger, Hansen's compassion is broad enough to forgive nearly all of them.



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**FOREWORD BY
RONALD REAGAN**

**Edited by
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MAKING GOVERNMENT WORK: A CONSERVATIVE AGENDA FOR THE STATES

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Hansen seems to leave the reader free to embrace almost any explanation of Mariette's stigmata. But he is doing more than that. In leaving the narrative open-ended, the author is asking us to make our own judgments, and thus to confront and question our deepest beliefs and emotions. Despite the strong evidence for the truth of her experience, why is it so hard for us to let go of our suspicion that Mariette may be nothing more than a brilliant fraud? Is there something in us that refuses to accept such signs of God's grace irrupting into our world?

At the end of the novel, Mother Saint Raphael says to Mariette: "God gives us just enough to seek Him, and never enough to fully find Him. To do more would inhibit our freedom, and our freedom is very dear to God." Taken out of context, this might sound like a relativist's creed, but the prioress is talking, in simple and direct language, about the nature of faith itself.

It is difficult to imagine someone like Mariette Baptiste living today, in the wake of the sweeping changes and liberalizations of the post-Vatican II years. The spirituality of the convent depicted in *Mariette in Ecstasy* would be condemned by many in the Catholic Church today as psychologically unhealthy and preoccupied with personal salvation at the expense of social justice. And yet, despite the allegedly morbid tendencies of the preconciliar Church, it is hard not to feel that something has been lost in the process of change. In returning us to that world, Ron Hansen communicates what the philosopher Unamuno called the "tragic sense of life." That is why *Mariette in Ecstasy* deserves to be compared with the fiction created by such twentieth-century Catholic novelists as Georges Bernanos, Francois Mauriac, and Graham Greene.

The Protestant Ethos

PROTESTANTS: THE BIRTH OF A REVOLUTION. By STEVEN OZMENT. Doubleday. 270 pp. \$20.

Reviewed by Charlotte Allen

I AM A CATHOLIC, but I married Protestant. My husband has steeped me in Protestant lore: Protestants get results. Protestants think ahead. Protestants save (Catholics spend). My Protestant in-laws had to endure our Catholic wedding, their faces rigid with polite distress as they took in the crucifix over the altar with its bleeding Christ and the candles flickering in front of the portrait of the dusky, brilliantly garbed Virgin of Guadalupe. In turn, I politely endure my mother-in-law's Protestant cooking: no garlic, no onions, no spices, no wine at the table. Catholics invented Cotes du Rhone and cannelloni; Protestants invented the airplane and the thirteen-week T-bill.

In this militantly secularized age, in which all faiths have been damped down into vague "traditions," Catholics and Protestants who actually believe in their respective religions have more in common, certainly on moral issues and probably on doctrinal ones as well, than either group has with the creed of the feel-good humanism that has invaded and displaced much of American Christianity. Nonetheless, even the most irenic of Catholics and Protestants continue to differ as sharply on the issue of what Christ meant when He talked of His church as they did in 1517, when Martin Luther nailed his ninety-five theses to the door of Castle Church in Wittenberg. Because religion is the *basso continuo* of culture, this difference still cuts as sharply as it did five hundred years ago, even here in Protestant America, where embarrassed, over-assimilated Catholics have lately lost much of their old immigrants'

pride of religious distinctiveness. It cuts a divide even in my own marriage, as my husband good-humoredly nails his own theses onto the door of the Catholic home I keep.

That is why Steven Ozment's book, *Protestants: The Birth of a Revolution*, is not just a superb piece of Reformation history but a shrewd examination of how the theory of Protestantism translates into the pragmatic, respectability-driven Protestant culture that prevails to this day on the prosperous Protestant lands of northern Europe and North America. Ozment is a professor of history at Harvard who claims a Catholic mother and a Protestant father—hence his even-handedness in approaching his subject. He sees his task as analyzing the Reformation not as a theological but as a cultural phenomenon: how the coming of Protestantism affected family life, how ordinary Protestants were different from their Catholic neighbors. Ozment also writes clear, cant-free prose, a remarkable feat these days when to read most products of academia is to slash one's way with a machete through a canefield of deconstructionist jargon. Not surprisingly, several of Ozment's previous books, *When Fathers Ruled* and *Three Behaim Boys* among them, got much play in the popular press and are still in print, even though Ozment's specialization, sixteenth-century Germany, is not exactly a field with mass appeal. *Protestants* looks at the Central Europeans who took so readily to the reformers' doctrine and tries to explain "what it meant then to be Protestant."

It was Max Weber, of course, who first pointed out the cultural implications of the Reformation in his famous study of Protestantism and capitalism. Weber assumed that the capitalist ethos—aspiration for worldly success combined with monkish self-denial—was merely a decadent version of the Reformation belief in justification by faith alone. According to Weber, when

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Protestants lost that faith, as so many did just before the Industrial Revolution, they unconsciously clung to a belief that wealth was a sign of divine favor.

Drawing on a vast library of pamphlets, catechisms, sermons, diaries, and letters surviving from Luther's era, Ozment shows that individualism, the work ethic, and an orientation to tangible results were part of the Protestant worldview from its very beginning. *Pace* Weber, that view was present in Lutheranism as well as in Calvinism. For Ozment, the Reformation was above all a revolution of consciousness and culture that practically overnight swept away the sensuous, theatrical, otherworldly Middle Ages from the cities whose inhabitants took up the reformers' brand of Christianity. Furthermore, Ozment believes, the Reformation turned its adherents into permanent revolutionaries who, armed with their Protestant belief in the primacy of individual conscience over authority and tradition, would continue to question all givens, even those of their own new faiths.

"The original intent of the reformers and pamphleteers who invented the Reformation was not to create docilely devout Christians, but to raise less credulous ones," Ozment writes. "In revolutionary literature that defined the Reformation at its inception, the image of the good Christian was preeminently that of a Bible-savvy layperson internally in control of his or her own spiritual life, immune to spiritual manipulation, uncoercible in conscience, able to see through Christian utopias and sociopolitical pipe dreams, and while respectful of tradition, never one to trust uncritically."

The long-prevailing view among historians has been that by the beginning of the sixteenth century the Church of Rome was sunk in worldly decadence and completely alienated from its laity. Ozment takes note of some recent revisionism on this score among historians who stress the socially integrative aspects of medieval Christianity

and view even the indulgence-peddling that Luther decried as feeding a vigorous popular piety that fostered trust in God and a sense of continuity between the living and the dead.

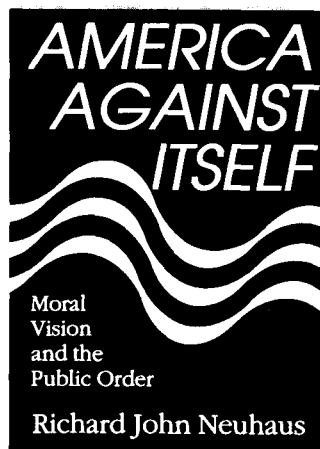
Now, Catholicism tolerates a good deal of slack, but even the revisionists have to admit that the ropes were loose indeed in Luther's time. The worst offenses seem to have been those of the clergy: bishops who never visited their sees, priests who flaunted concubines and bastards while charging money to hear confessions, monks and nuns whose preoccupation was worldly power rather than the self-emptying life St. Benedict prescribed. There was certainly a huge number of clergy and religious—6 to 10 percent of the population of the great cities of central Europe, according to Ozment—which suggests that rather more people were entering religious life than actually had vocations for it. Franciscan and Dominican friars stood on every corner begging alms from passers-by.

WITTENBERG, the birthplace of the Reformation, at the end of the

fifteenth century contained a veritable Madame Toussaud's of relics, some 19,000 of them, including a skeleton of one of the Holy Innocents massacred by Herod and a piece of Moses' burning bush, all housed next door to the very church on whose door Luther posted his theses. Add to this a proliferation of holy days on which work was forbidden and feasting mandated and a proliferation of shrines and pilgrimages that crammed the cities with the devout, the desperate, the mountebanks, and the good-time seekers. Urban life in the late Middle Ages sounds like, well, a lot of fun, if fun of a garish nature—Euro Disneyland without the ersatz.

Nonetheless, it is easy to see how the reformers could fire resentment up to the simmer among sober and hardworking lay people at all levels of society who had to pay for this running spectacle of exaltation and vice. "People who left the old religion for the new either had spiritual needs the church did not fulfill or religious grievances it failed in their minds to redress or both," writes Ozment. He shows how the pamphleteers painted the church's rules and its calendar (which con-

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tained as many fast days as feast days) as instruments of social control that prevented tradespeople from eating what they wanted and maximizing their honest earnings; monks, nuns, and friars as parasites; elaborately decorated churches as built on theft from their congregations; masses for the dead (paid for with contributions) as simony; and the religious hierarchy as a bullying, self-aggrandizing, non-biblical superstructure whose main function was the amassing of wealth. "They have taken the things of our world over into theirs, so that everything of ours has become theirs," complained Eberlin von Guenzburg, a former Franciscan friar who became the most prolific Protestant pamphleteer after Luther.

The Reformation shut down the whole St. Bartholomew's fair of medieval life. Protestant theology obliterated the distinction between the clergy and laity. The doctrine of justification by faith made confession, fasting, pilgrimages, and masses for the dead pointless. Almsgiving was also pointless unless it actually improved the condition of the poor. Venerating the saints (and keeping their feast days) was idolatry, as was decorating churches with expensive statues and stained-glass windows.

Ozment describes the startling transformation a visitor to one of those medieval cities would perceive just a decade or two after Luther's revolt: the churches stripped and whitewashed; the monasteries and convents closed except for a few cloisters housing elderly religious who could not be pensioned off; the clergy—those who were left—married; musical instruments, Latin, and hymns to the Virgin banished from the Sunday service; lay boards operating the charitable and educational institutions and enforcing a sober moralism combined with a strong sense of civic purpose. Everyone was expected to earn a living by an honest trade. Prefiguring the Victorian social reformers, the Protestants drew a firm line between the

deserving and the undeserving poor and reserved their almsgiving for the former. No Mother Teresas they; the reformers turned charity into a rationalized welfare system.

OZMENT DRAWS vivid portraits of some of the ordinary Protestants of the sixteenth century. The most striking is that of Thomas Platter, a sickly, morally punctilious son of a Swiss peasant who was studying for the Catholic priesthood in Zurich while Huldrych Zwingli was turning that city into a Reformation stronghold. Platter's first Protestant act was to throw a painting of St. John into the stove for firewood. After several years of internal struggle, he abandoned his priestly studies and married a housemaid, Anna. The two led lives of grueling poverty for several years, he taking in students, she spinning and making rope. Finally the Platters moved to Basel, where Thomas learned the printing trade. He ultimately climbed up to prosperity and honor, becoming Basel's schoolmaster—a post he held for thirty-one years—successfully staving off efforts by the local university to control his school's curriculum. Unbendable and resourceful, Thomas and Anna Platter were quintessential Protestants, ever ready to break with tradition, family, and higher authority for the sake of conscience and personal happiness. Like all good Protestants, no matter how poor they started out, they ended up well off.

Because they rejected as unnatural the Catholic concept of a vocation to celibacy, the early Protestants, especially Luther, were preoccupied with married love and family life—a sphere of human existence that the Catholic Church had ignored or had at least taken for granted. Luther revered his wife, the former nun Katharine von Bora, who bore him six children. Katharine was an accomplished housewife and businesswoman who remodeled the former cloister where they lived to accommodate paying guests and was renowned for the excellent beer she brewed (this was

long before Protestantism so closely allied itself with the temperance movement). To matters of the relations between spouses and the raising of children to be both good Christians and responsible adults the Protestants brought earnestness and care. Luther loved his children so much that after two of his daughters died in childhood, he spoke about almost losing faith in God. The Catholic Church, by contrast, did not concern itself institutionally with family life until the nineteenth century, when the dislocations of the Industrial Revolution had already started ravaging families. When Pope John Paul II speaks nowadays of the Christian home as a "domestic Church," he is using an image borrowed directly from Luther.

IT WAS NOT long into the sixteenth century when the Protestant reformers discovered that they had, in Ozment's words, "sown the wind." Once the initial break with Rome occurred, there was no stopping the proliferation of Protestant sects, some far more millennial, utopian, and radically egalitarian than the fundamentally conservative Luther could have ever imagined. One manifestation of the revolutionary spiritualism the Reformation unleashed was the Peasants' Revolt of 1525, an anarchic commoners' rising against German landholders that, with Luther's approval, the Protestant princes promptly crushed. Luther's doctrine of the "two kingdoms," rigorously separating the spheres of ecclesiastical and secular authority, led eventually to the thorough secularizing of Western society, the privatizing of religion, and, save for such notable exceptions as the Amish, the draining of the sense of the sacred out of everyday life. Not surprisingly, Protestants were the first Western Christians to lose their faith en masse to modernity (Catholic have lately been catching up, however).

Protestantism offered a radically simplified religious life but not an easy one. Of its initial converts,

Ozment reports, half returned to the Catholic fold by the end of the sixteenth century. "The slack had gone out of religion, but with it went also, as the passage of time confirmed, some of the familiarity and comfort," he writes. "The reformers in the end created a version of what they had originally vehemently opposed: an elite religion."

Because today's Protestants so strikingly resemble their Reformation forebears, *Protestants* offers a prophetic picture of what could happen to the Catholic cultures of Latin America, through which evangelical Christianity is now sweeping like a firestorm, its clergy preaching sobriety and the road to prosperity.

The book is also instructive for Catholics in another sense, for Ozment's picture of the Protestantized German towns during the early Reformation resembles nothing so much as post-Vatican II American Catholicism, both as it

is now and as church liberals would like to see it in the future. We Catholics too have empty cloisters now, and churches whose statues have become firewood. We have our own agitators for a married clergy and a dissolution of hierarchy. "The fear of God will vanish forever/Together with the whole of Scripture," warned an anti-Lutheran pamphlet of the sixteenth century. One of the lessons of *Protestants* is that all reformers bear swords and that swords can cut unexpectedly deep.

Hauerwas Examined

AFTER CHRISTENDOM? By STANLEY HAUERWAS. Abingdon Press. 192 pp. \$12.95 paper.

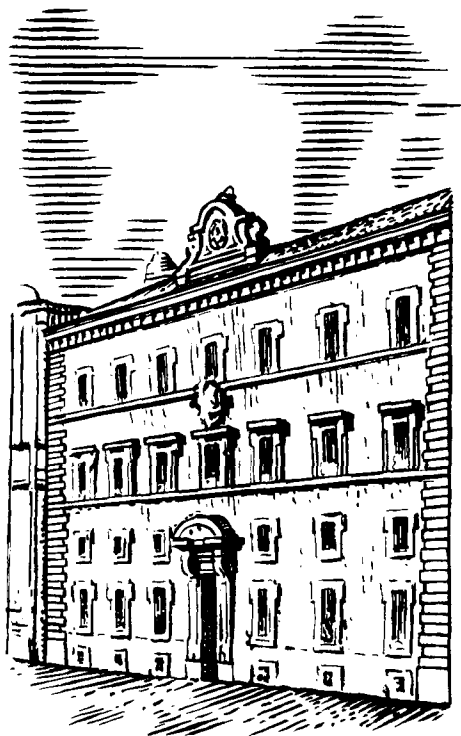
Reviewed by Robert W. Jenson

STANLEY HAUERWAS once told me that *After Christendom?* might be the systematic assembly of his thought for which friends and op-

ponents have pressed him. In considerable part, the promise is fulfilled. The chapters of this book were drafted for a single set of lectures and work together in a way not common in Hauerwas' books. If for this reason alone, and there are many others, the book is to be read.

Nevertheless, the chapters of this work are also a succession of separately comprehensible essays. His unifying conceptual commitments, moreover, were in fact closer to the surface in *Christian Existence Today* than they are here. And we had better stop pressing Hauerwas for more; he has gone over to the offense. "The very idea of systematic theology was a result of a

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church with hegemonic power that belied the very substance that made it a church to begin with." A reviewer who is a systematic theologian is tempted to ask if the founder of our discipline, the great Origen, has been retroactively rescued from the Decian persecution—but never mind.

The first thing to be said is that, in this book as before, Hauerwas is right about so much that nearly the whole American church and academy culpably have wrong, and he is so beneficial in his ability to say what others can or will not say, that he fully deserves his position as bellweather and *bête noire* of American theological ethics. I found the opening chapters, those that lay out a framework, more continuously satisfying than some of the later ones that fill it in. This is doubtless a result of my systematician's prejudices. But it is also a regular phenomenon when I read Hauerwas: I think I am in full agreement until I hit some of the more particular consequences he draws.

The work's subject is Christianity's present relation to liberal society. That relation is characterized by quoting George Lindbeck: Christianity is now in an "awkwardly intermediate stage of having once been culturally established but not yet clearly disestablished." The great power of the work is its blunt description of the awkwardness.

To be sure, about half of Hauerwas' gravamen might better apply to a situation of Christianity's unbroken establishment within liberal society than to a situation of in-process disestablishment from it. The way this works in Hauerwas' thinking seems to be that Western society's liberalization itself entailed Christianity's disestablishment, so that Christianity's establishment in modernity intrinsically means clinging to an establishment in process of dissolution. But does this mean that Christianity's situation was less "awkward" when it was less ambiguously established in the pre-modern West? Perhaps less awkward and more simply wrong, for Hauerwas' key pejorative throughout this book is "hegemonic." But if establishment

as such was an evil, has not liberalism done some good by inaugurating disestablishment? And should not the sources of that good within liberalism be located? Something shows itself here.

HAUERWAS' diagnosis has two poles. Both are familiar from earlier work. Both, I think, are accurately placed.

First. To be—or to try to remain—established in a liberal society, Christianity must understand itself as a particular "system of beliefs." Just thereby, it is trivialized. When there were integral Christians, they knew themselves to be "participants in a grand drama of God's salvation of all creation," involved "with the power that moves the sun and the stars." But a set of beliefs cannot participate in drama; only a community does that, which just thereby is a "political" community.

Integral Christians knew that Christian "beliefs" are "correlative" to moral practices in community, so that "without the church there is no possibility of salvation and even less of morality and/or politics." Freedom of religion, as freedom to entertain various private beliefs, is one thing; the freedom of the church, which is her freedom "as a people capable of saying no to the world" and which she receives from no one but God, is quite another. A church that accepts liberalism's accommodation for faith abandons the particular freedom of faith and so faith itself.

Second. Clinging to establishment in a liberal world, Hauerwas writes, Christians come to think that responsibility for the world means trying to make liberalism work. Thereby we but connive in our own social and political irrelevancy, for the rules by which the liberal world excludes such fanatics as Christians from the public realm are essential to what makes the liberal world work.

We accept ethics that identify as the moral agent "that new creature we have learned to call 'the individual,' " thereby denying the church's reality as a moral agent. We accept politics that are no longer, as anciently, "the ongoing conversation necessary for the discovery of goods

in common . . . [but] the means necessary to secure cooperation between people who share nothing . . . other than their desire to survive." The crucial distinction that sustains such politics is between the public and the private; Christianity goes to the private side. We construe the whole moral life by "love and justice"; thereby "Christian social ethics become functionally atheistic."

A church that so understands herself cannot, of course, be a disciplined community. Thus she cannot teach even her own members virtue the only way that virtue can in fact be taught, by apprenticeship and drill. (I read this book in proof; there the chapter on this matter, chapter 4, bore the marvelous title, apparently marked to be changed: "Why a Friendly, Caring Church is Impotent.")

A CHURCH THAT understood herself as church would not be surprised by the further awkwardness that the liberal world itself is coming apart, Hauerwas contends, for in making the church irrelevant the liberal world has undone its own sole support. The communal moral capital that liberal society discredits was what it lived on. Freedom of *religion* solved the problem of religious pluralism only by making the problem of forming a culture unsolvable. The purely procedural state that no longer promotes the good but exists only to protect rights is exponentially coercive, since thereby it becomes a universal administration. Liberal societies cannot live without continual conflict, since the separate demands they evoke are infinite. Indeed, says Hauerwas, a self-aware Christianity would seize liberalism's troubles as a great opportunity to challenge modernity's false universalism and "recover the *locality* of Christian salvation called the church" (emphasis added).

According to Hauerwas, what the church truly has for the world is one thing only: *witness*. In the present book, this is Hauerwas' final answer to the problem of Christianity in a disintegrating liberal society. Witness to God: "The first thing as Christians

we have to hold before any society is not justice but God." And witness to herself: "Salvation is a political alternative that the world cannot know apart from the existence of a concrete people called the church."

SO MUCH summary is accompanied by so much enthusiasm. But I must now report that this book disquieted me in a way none of Hauerwas' earlier work has done. The disquiet became most intense at the very end. Hauerwas appends a letter from a graduate student who had read the last lecture. The letter calls the very notion of "witness" violent, simply in that witness asserts as true for the other a truth that the other does not already possess. Duke University's French connection duly appears in a citation of Deleuze, citing Nietzsche to the effect that those who claim truth really claim the right to judge life, which is beyond judgment. And to this letter Hauerwas can only comment, "It is a reminder that the way of nonviolence is never easy and that our language can embody . . . violence in ways that we hardly knew."

Can Hauerwas' thinking finally sustain its own central claim, that the church is the world's salvation? The church cannot save the world in any of the ways the liberal church tries, and Hauerwas rightly rubs our nose in this plain fact. But *how* then is the church the world's salvation?

The student has a point: every claim to speak truth does indeed exercise something that might plausibly be called "violence," if we so choose to use the language. If Hauerwas accepts this usage of "violence," he must abandon witness as what the church can do for the world. It seems, indeed, he must end with a doctrine that the church saves the world simply by silently existing. Now even such a doctrine may be sustainable, but only by a lot more speculative systematic theology than Hauerwas seems willing to countenance.

That Hauerwas may in fact accept a sense of "violent" like that employed by his student, and so be committed to regard as violent every claim to truth not already possessed

by the other, is also suggested elsewhere in the book. The last chapter, on "Christian Education in Liberal Societies," joins the fashionable—I never thought I would use this pejorative about Hauerwas!—attack on "eurocentrism" in academic standards and curricula. As the student correctly sees, the position from which consistent "multiculturalism" can be sustained is fatal to "witness." Hauerwas tries to elide the problem by saying Christians need stand neither with the hegemonists nor with the nihilist multiculturalists: "What we must ask, however, is how Christians ever got ourselves in the position to believe we must make such a choice. . . ." Such moves in Hauerwas are often precisely right. This one is plainly a dodge.

I have a suggestion. All address by the church to the world must indeed be "violent"—as all mutual address by factions within the world undoubtedly must be—*unless* the church and the world are always antecedently involved in one conversation. That is, unless there is God and unless he is in converse with the world by ways other than by way of the church. We may not want, as I do not, to construe this converse by the categories of "natural" and "law." But Hauerwas has arrived at a position where he must acknowledge and construe it somehow, or end with a silenced church.

It is, I think, the same unease that afflicted me while reading Hauerwas' argument against those who, like Richard John Neuhaus, have some hope that American general religiosity can have a saving role within a liberal polity that deserves to be saved. A first draft of this review was written immediately after President Bush's State of the Union speech last January. It began, "Hauerwas is right and Neuhaus is wrong!" And I am indeed less hopeful for what is actually available to clothe our public square than is Neuhaus. And yet there is a curious emptiness and withdrawal about Hauerwas' polemic. If God is not speaking in that awful religiosity out there, how is the church to speak to it without violence? How indeed is there any-

thing out there of which the church might be the salvation?

These are, of course, but a systematic theologian's quibbles.

Don't Bet Democratic

MINORITY PARTY: WHY THE DEMOCRATS FACE DEFEAT IN 1992 AND BEYOND. By PETER BROWN. *Regnery Gateway*. 350 pp. \$21.95.

Reviewed by William McGurn

BY ANY RECKONING, Tom and Geri Suma should be Democrats. Both come from Democratic families. Like many of his and his wife's forebears,

WILLIAM MCGURN, *Washington bureau chief of National Review*, is author most recently of *Perfidious Albion: The Abandonment of Hong Kong 1997*.

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Tom started out on the line for Chrysler. Geri voted for Eugene McCarthy in the 1968 primaries. And they still keep a bust of JFK in the living room.

The turning point for them came when Democratic politicians began to support busing programs that would have taken their son, Greg, miles away from the neighborhood school one-and-a-half blocks from their home in Warren, Michigan. They were not opposed to having blacks bused into their school. Rather, they were worried that they would not be able to reach Greg, an asthmatic, because he was too far away.

That was the first step. The liberal indifference to their problems led them to question other aspects of the Democratic agenda. In 1968 Geri voted for Nixon because of busing but felt guilty about it and kept quiet. By 1972, she says, she started to realize the Democrats weren't going to come back. Jimmy Carter's disastrous economics sealed it. They voted for Reagan enthusiastically twice, and today consider themselves solid Republicans.

What happened?

In *Minority Party*, Scripps Howard newspaperman Peter Brown cites the Sumas to support his argument that the Democrats simply abandoned the middle class, the values as well as the people. Some of this, he argues, is because many of the old ethnics (Irish, Italians, Poles, etc.) acquired more Republican tastes as they bought into the American Dream. Some part, too, is a result of the foreign policy negatives of George McGovern and the overall positives of Ronald Reagan. But the main reason is that the Democrats began to question the whole American premise of opportunity, as important to those on the bottom as those in the middle and on top. "The people who are not middle class are trying to become middle class [and] those who are in the middle class are trying to do better," says John Lewis, a black Democratic Congressman from Atlanta. "The Democratic message doesn't appeal to their aspirations."

BROWN suggests that the big divide is race. By giving black Democratic leaders a veto power over party policy, the Democrats have been steadily alienating the white majority—without whom it is simply impossible to win a presidential election. This is not racist; it's math. Nor, from the evidence he provides, are Democrats likely to recover, if only because the people who make such decisions are so different from the people they have to appeal to. "What the data show," writes Brown, "is a Democratic primary electorate disproportionately made up of those either not competing in the economic marketplace or protected from it by unions or government service."

To be sure, Brown is no Reagan Republican. He's not even a Reagan Democrat. As he makes clear from the start, he is simply a Democrat from a long line of Democrats. But this only makes his claims all the more compelling—not to mention courageous. To write what he writes within the Democratic party today is to be tarred as a racist. Brown knows this, but he insists he is merely a physician giving an unpopular but nonetheless accurate diagnosis without which any recovery is impossible.

Ironically, although the book is ostensibly about minorities, specifically racial minorities, what Brown really is getting at has more to do with ideology than race. True enough, in the public mind the Democrats have become "the party of blacks." But it's truer still to characterize them as the party of those blacks who see the answer to everything in government. Whether this constitutes the majority of blacks or whether there are significant sectors of the black community that think otherwise is a question not pondered here. The fact is that, even though every other racial minority is at least split on the issue, as a party the Democrats and their black leaders have adopted an exclusively statist understanding of minority rights.

The result is that the black alliance within the Democratic party is not with other racial minorities but with ideologically based groupings—feminists, gays, unions—who are now

divorced from the values of the party's traditional base, not to mention those of the black public (Jesse Jackson, for example, flip-flopped on almost all these issues once he decided to run for the nomination). For the book's purpose Brown limits himself largely to how the white majority, without whom reconquest of the White House is impossible, is reacting to these perceptions.

Mostly they are reacting to a palpable double standard. In the 1989 Senate contest between Jesse Helms and Harvey Gantt, for example, a weakened North Carolina Senator faced united opposition from a black candidate who enjoyed the support of a national liberal alliance that pulled out all the stops to defeat him. Even when they lost, Democrats could not bring themselves to believe that it was due to anything but racism (though Gantt's own pollster is cited to the contrary). The irony, of course, is that while Helms' counterattack on the civil rights legislation left Democrats aghast, they saw nothing unseemly in their own efforts to paint him as Grand Kleagle of the U.S. Senate. Brown notes the absurdity of the Democratic National Chairman's basic position that "there was no legitimate way for a candidate who opposed the civil rights bill to raise the quota issue."

FOR ALL the book's concern with politics, however, the heart of *Minority Party* is a moral proposition: the legitimacy of success in America and the validity of opportunity. In modern America, the Democratic leaders have promiscuously embraced the values (or lack thereof) of the counterculture. They

see virtue in poverty and think that it should be rewarded. The middle class thinks differently. It puts in an eight-hour workday and, in many cases, two more hours commuting. Middle-class people figure they get what their hard work deserves. They are the ones who build the wealth and pay the taxes that support American society. In their view, those who

don't work or who don't work productively fail to keep their end of the social compact.

This is the message that comes through from the many average Democrats (typically former Democrats) who became disaffected with their party when it drifted off into the fever swamps of the left. At times Brown seems to suggest that this disaffection is traceable to the suburbanization of the working class, which he believes contributed to a loss of interest in good old-fashioned Democratic class warfare. Undoubtedly affluence did breed new attitudes. But in fact the party changed much more than its people.

This is because (as Brown's own summation of their feelings shows) there is no evidence that working- or middle-class Democrats who moved out to the suburbs after working hard for the privilege changed their moral standards when they

moved. More likely they moved out of the city when the cities became inhospitable to their moral beliefs. It wasn't too long ago, for example, that areas of American cities where angels now fear to tread were wonderful places to live. Indeed, cities became inhospitable to the middle class about the same time the Democrats shifted their own attitude toward that class.

When Democrats attacked the rich in the old days, they did not attack either wealth itself or success. In the old days unions were formed precisely so that members could share in the wealth and riches they helped create. Not only has the definition of "rich" been ratcheted down dramatically—not least among the reasons for voter rejection of the Democratic message is that they know that "soak the rich" will shortly translate into taking more from the middle class—the idea of making it, once so crucial, has been delegitimated. The

Democratic message today is that "those who have prospered in American society have somehow done so at the expense of those who have not, regardless of whether or not the successful person acted wrongly."

The lower- and middle-class hostility toward Democrats stems from this moral divide. Brown is closer to the truth of things when he cites Louise, a self-professed liberal who turned on the party after seeing welfare children coming to school in designer jeans while she was sewing her own clothes to make ends meet. Brown calls the kind of system that tolerates this "an insult to her parents' work ethic." It's hard to imagine an FDR, a Truman, a Kennedy thinking any differently.

EVEN today's vehement opposition to affirmative action is a result of the way Democrats have defined and defended it. Most Americans accepted the argument that past discrimina-

PERFIDIOUS ALBION

THE ABANDONMENT OF HONG KONG 1997

William McGurn

foreword by William F. Buckley, Jr.

When Britain agreed to allow the People's Republic of China to take over Hong Kong in 1997, British officials explained that the Communist Chinese were reforming and would allow the colony to continue its dynamic capitalist ways. Besides, they said, by then Hong Kong would have a working representative government. Eight years later, those assurances seem hollow. McGurn—formerly a reporter for the *Asian Wall Street Journal*—examines the 1984 Joint Declaration, Beijing's failure to uphold it and London's failure to enforce it, and the resultant plight of Hong Kong's 5.8 million citizens. **188 pages / \$16.95 cloth**

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ETHICS AND PUBLIC POLICY CENTER

tion had disadvantaged black Americans and that special help was required to get them back on their feet. At the time of the civil rights struggle, moreover, black leaders argued for integration and opportunity rather than quotas and set asides; one wonders whether the Rev. Martin Luther King's speeches would be acceptable in the Democratic Party of the 1990s. The public beef with affirmative action is not over the original inspiration but the reality that ensued: a manifest failure—and, to explain that failure, the increasing resort to victimology.

If I have a quarrel with the book (apart from its tendency to exaggerate the role of suburbia in changing values instead of understanding it as a refuge), it is that Brown's acute understanding of Democratic weaknesses at times makes him prone to attribute more to Republican planning and acumen than the Grand Old Party deserves. Reagan was an exception, to be sure, and his consequent popularity among traditionally Democratic voters was obvious. But *Minority Party* makes it clear that Reagan hastened a process that would have happened if Republicans had done nothing at all.

In the end, the key Democratic mistake is that they continue to peddle exclusively government answers even to questions that are social, economic, and spiritual in nature. This in turn has bred an attitude that the solution to every conceivable social ill is but a million dollars (or a million condoms) away. As former Arizona Governor Bruce Babbitt puts it, "We became the party of permissiveness, not tolerance." Whatever disagreements Americans may have about where the line is to be drawn, they will continue to be reluctant to bestow the presidency on anyone who doesn't understand the distinction.

The Feminist as Paranoid

BACKLASH: THE UNDECLARED WAR AGAINST AMERICAN WOMEN. BY SUSAN FALUDI. Crown. 549 pp. \$24.

Reviewed by Jean Bethke Elshtain

LOOK OUT: here comes Susan Faludi leading the Charge of the Lightweight Brigade! Her thesis is simplicity itself. Just in case the reader might not get it straight off, it is repeated in each and every chapter title—all fourteen of them. There is and has been a terrible backlash in this land of ours, catalyzed by the Deadly Duo (Reagan, Bush), who have been aided and abetted in their nefarious war against "American Women," no less, by various female malefactors, some openly hostile towards the aspiration of "women," others *apparently* promoting women's interests when what they are *really* doing is serving the backlashers. In other words, this is the latest entry in a burgeoning genre: left-wing conspiracy theory.

When I was an undergraduate in the 1960s out in the Western provinces (Colorado, it was), my instructors (Democrats to a man, no women in what was called the History and Government Department at Colorado State University in those benighted times) not only encouraged me to make the most of myself, they taught me that conspiracy theory was the hobgoblin of little minds, like those of the local John Birchers. We studied one of their texts in a Government course, unpacking the way the author crossed every *t* and dotted every *i* with his overriding paranoid theory, if it may be called that, that the Communists and their dupes ran everything, appearances to the contrary notwithstanding. He had lots of facts too. It all made sense—if you

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shared the initial paranoid starting point. We mocked this stuff and marveled that anyone could believe it. The Birchers were pretty much defeated by this sort of humorous dismissal, as was a local group that launched a campaign against the Beatles as the instruments of Satan.

Don't get me wrong. Every now and then there are conspiracies. But it strains credulity to believe that all sectors of a society as complex as our own—education, politics, the media, advertising, music, scholarship, psychology, medicine, movies, fashion, toy makers, *and* (unkindest cut of all) many women themselves—are conspiring and colluding against all women everywhere, which means, in many instances, against themselves.

FALUDI'S *Backlash* is an amazing beast, a living, breathing monster possessing irresistible force. Thus: "Just when women's quest for equal rights seemed closest to achieving its objectives, the backlash struck it down. Just when a 'gender gap' at the voting booth surfaced in 1980, and women in politics began to talk of capitalizing on it, the Republican party elevated Ronald Reagan and both political parties began to shunt women's rights off their platforms." On and on in this vein. When Faludi touches on the rise in female poverty (directly correlated with the rise in female-headed households—there's no doubt about this relationship), the rise in violence against women, the rise of eating disorders, she blames it all on The Backlash.

But suppose someone came along and blamed all these things on feminism—after all, didn't these phenomena appear after the rise of the feminist movement?—and dredged up the relevant statistics to make the case. This would be the occasion for outrage on Faludi's part and further evidence of Backlash. The point is that conspiracy theory, no matter in whose hands, is a monument to anti-intellectualism. For serious laborers in the vineyard of the human sciences understand that all social phenomena have very complex roots—they are, as we say, overdetermined—and it takes skill, real acumen, an eye both

for detail and the big picture, and, above all, intellectual honesty to explore such matters.

Backlash, on the other hand, is social science manqué. The apparatus of scholarship is there, but the book's each and every claim represents a radical reduction of social reality and experience, particularly Faludi's presumption that any rethinking undertaken by any feminist at any time, if the thinker in question comes out at some place Faludi dislikes, constitutes a *prima facie* case that the woman in question has become a backlash pawn. A leading example of this is Betty Friedan, who, whatever might be one's disagreement with her, surely cannot be charged with having hit upon revisionism as a "marketing tool," or with being no more than "a fallen leader who is clearly distressed and angry that she wasn't allowed to be the Alpha wolf as long as she would have liked." An analyst of motives might have something to say about an ambitious young woman's dealing that way with an elder.

For Faludi the use of the intellect is a very dangerous thing indeed; it might lead to what she labels "declarations of apostasy," by which she more or less means disagreement with some or all of *her* feminist agenda, guaranteed to be the one and only pure product. To deviate in the slightest is to fling oneself over a cliff into the arms of Backlash.

Thus, in her hands, scholars like Sylvia Ann Hewlett and Carol Gilligan, writers who have devoted their careers to the effort to understand the lives of women, become part of a "NeoFem Backlash Brain Trust." Faludi denounces Hewlett ("who was living at the time at a fashionable Manhattan address with her investment-banker husband") for daring to suggest that mainstream feminism, of the rights-absolutist sort, might not have well-served many "ordinary women." Hewlett is discredited because she draws "ordinary women" into the picture and, it is clear to Faludi, she has little contact with such women. No doubt Faludi herself doesn't spend her

summer vacation working alongside migrant farm laborers, but that ought not to prevent her from drawing attention to their plight.

Faludi tries to undermine Hewlett's claim that it was women themselves who were most mobilized and effective in defeating the Equal Rights Amendment on the grass-roots level by pointing out that in documenting this claim Hewlett "quotes almost exclusively from one source: Eagle Forum's Phyllis Schlafly, who directed the Stop ERA program." The truth of the matter, however, is that thousands of women *did* mobilize against the ERA. They did so, in part, because of uncertainty as to what the ERA in practice might mean for traditional protective legislation and, in part, because "the women's organizations promoting the ERA had decided that women must be drafted" should the ERA pass. This was pointed out by Jane Mansbridge in her prize-winning book, *Why We Lost the ERA*. Mansbridge believes it was a strategic error for feminist jurisprudentialists to insist that the ERA would not only make gender a *suspect* category for purposes of juridical interpretation, but, even further, a *forbidden* category. This fueled anti-ERA fervor. Faludi, of course, cites no respectable scholarship, such as Mansbridge, on the ERA, relying instead on her own shoot-from-the-hip posture for her certainty that such fears about ERA were unfounded and hence part of the conspiracy. But finally, the real blow she strikes against Hewlett is her allusion to the fact that Hewlett's book *A Lesser Life* "did not become a major seller." Can it be that the concern for marketing is on the other foot?

But Faludi saves the harshest denunciation for her discussion of Carol Gilligan, whose 1982 text, *In a Different Voice*, helped to frame the debate over men, women, and difference for our epoch. Her treatment of Gilligan's work is reductive and contemptuous, concluding with the comment that Gilligan's regrets that her work may be "misused" by anti-feminists don't "really matter," for the "damage has already been done," no matter what Gilligan may say or do.

Gilligan has spent the last decade working with, and listening to, young girls as they grow into young women. Her work is serious in the best sense, worthy of engagement. Faludi's five-page dismissal is a travesty.

ON HER WAY to pillorying Gilligan, Faludi manages to skewer Sara Ruddick, author of *Maternal Thinking*. Now, Ruddick is extraordinarily careful to write of maternal thinking not as an ontological given but as a hard-won epistemology that emerges from engaging in maternal practices, and she specifically attacks the "idealized Good Mother," pointing out that many mothers "who live in the Good Mother's shadow . . . come to feel their lives are riddled with shameful secrets that even the closest friends can't share." Of this tough-minded writer, Faludi says that she writes, "sometimes in starry-eyed terms, of women's inordinate capacity for kindness, service to others, and cooperation." In other words, Ruddick is charged with holding precisely the view she has set out to criticize.

Taking a leaf from Faludi's own book, one could argue that the Backlashers are cleverer by far than even Faludi suspects, for they have enlisted her, all unwitting, in their cause, and can now gleefully claim a best-selling assault by a woman against other women in the name of regenerating feminism.

Leaving such thoughts aside, *Backlash* properly takes its place as part of the growing politics, or, if you will, anti-politics, of scandal. Indeed, it is itself an anti-political book. For Faludi cannot seem to understand that hers are not the only chess pieces on the board. In her insularity, she fails to see that we live in a world of independent actors. When things don't work out, it may be because others were better at politics—at convincing their fellow citizens—than we were. Others have moves to make, too. It's something called democracy.

Back to Our Future

INVENTING THE MIDDLE AGES: THE LIVES, WORKS, AND IDEAS OF THE GREAT MEDIEVALISTS OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY. By NORMAN F. CANTOR. *William Morrow*. 477 pp. \$28.

Reviewed by Robin Darling Young

WHEN WE READ every day of the affairs of some medieval institution—the papacy, the British Parliament, the rabbinate, or the Deir ul-Islam—we are looking into the Middle Ages.

That almost inconceivably vast stretch of time, usually reckoned as 500-1500 A.D., has a kind of double life in our culture. On the one hand, its thought, institutions, and habits live on under the surface of the cultural waters we ourselves navigate. We take its legacy for granted as our own. On the other hand, we regard it as alien, with either romantic nostalgia or revulsion. To call a person or thing medieval is often to label it as obscure; recall the depiction of the “Age of Faith” in the movie *The Name of the Rose*, in which Sean Connery as Br. William of Baskerville symbolized the progress of reason against his, and our, enemy, the Dominican inquisitor. However, the literary evocation of the period and its ideals, for instance in J. R. R. Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings*, has generated a constant market—preparing the way, perhaps, for the similarly romantic *Star Wars* series, a medieval tale in a sci-fi setting. These and numerous other pop-medieval stories show how strong is the pull of the pre-Reformation Western past.

Yet how little certain knowledge we have of it is well-demonstrated in this generous and sprawling work by Norman Cantor. Reading his lively account of the scholars who excavate and display the Middle Ages, an account replete with cultural history, moral judgment, psy-

chological speculation, gossip, and no small amount of romantic idealism and *fin-de-siècle* pathos, the reader can reflect as much upon his own world, and about the character of Cantor himself, as he does about the painstaking task of historical reconstruction that absorbed the lives of such as Theodor Mommsen, Marc Bloch, or David Knowles. This book, which on its face seems to have been motivated by the old-timer’s urge to reminisce by means of the biographical genre, is actually a fine work of history, and in the end its author is unafraid to suggest that the work of history is itself an enterprise of devotion, a kind of spiritual work.

ONE WHO WANTS to understand the medieval matrix of the present world must depend upon the works of scores of specialists and those few great historical writers who summarize and recast the former. Yet the conception of the medieval world changes along with contemporary intellectual trends, as these are absorbed by medievalists. The half-conscious, sometimes unconscious, application of contemporary questions to medieval texts is a process interwoven with the personalities of those medieval historians. The armaments of scholarly technique are critical in the enterprise, of course; those techniques, though, can be deployed for greater or lesser good depending upon the mind and character, even the soul, of the historian. Cantor recognizes this, and as he works his way through the lives of the great medievalists from the late nineteenth century through the present day, he is, like Plutarch, not afraid to distribute praise or blame to scholars and their works.

Cantor makes the “founding era” of medieval studies the period from 1895 to about 1965, and in nine chapters he discusses twenty scholars whom he calls “master medievalists,” with their students. These men, and a few women, created a discipline where none had existed before. They were able to do so thanks to an unrepeatable set of conditions: the collection of texts in nationally funded libraries and archives; the

creation of university chairs and graduate seminars in Europe and the United States; the willingness, at the end of the Victorian era, to reconsider the modern condemnation of the Middle Ages as an era of darkness.

Each school of medieval studies had its own quest and its own collection of prejudices, and each contributed a portion of knowledge and interpretation to medieval studies in the twentieth century. The first “master medievalist,” the Cambridge legal scholar William Maitland, influenced Americans, particularly legal realists of the 1930s and ’40s, more than his fellow Britons. His work was modernist and functionalist, and revolutionary in regarding the Parliament as a creation of the British crown for the good order of the realm rather than as an expression of the national will.

The leaders of the second school, whom Cantor acidly labels “the Nazi twins,” Percy Ernst Schramm and Ernst Hartwig Kantorowicz, were wildly different from Maitland; inspired by the “disturbed ambience” of interwar Germany, they looked backward to Germany in the Middle Ages for heroic precedents. Their idealism looked for “a revived imperial Middle Ages in their own time.” What arrived instead was Hitler. Cantor, having received some training under Mommsen, sees some value in the German medievalist tradition, yet in Germany itself—thanks, he says, to “the Nazi calamity, postwar materialism, and the leftist orientation of the German humanists”—that tradition is dead.

IN FRANCE, “the French Jews,” Louis Halphen and Bloch, were part of a new approach to the Middle Ages which, beginning in the 1920s, has taken as its subject not the heroes or the thought of the Middle Ages but the economy and social habits over the *longue durée*. Still influential through its heirs and their journal *Annales*, this school controls French academic life and much of public opinion with an absolute rule resembling, not coincidentally, that of Louis Quatorze. It is this school, characterized by Cantor as having

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high "communicative skills and marketing techniques" overlaid on Marxist presuppositions, that has so influenced American medievalists lately. (That it is a French school has kept it deliciously fashionable.)

Primarily as historians of literature and art, "The Formalists" of chapter five, Erwin Panofsky and Ernst Curtius, pursued an understanding of medieval culture because they thought it would enliven the society of the twentieth century. Like the late-medieval humanists and Reformers, they search the sources for indications of present direction in "an effort to combat the culture of political despair, spiritual pessimism, and moral relativism in order to preserve the hard residue of humanistic values . . . against the barbarian threats of Nazism and Stalinism."

Not unlike the formalists, but (being English) less theoretical were the men Cantor calls "the Oxford fantasists"—Tolkien, C. S. Lewis, and Frederick Maurice Powicke. The first two expressed, especially in their popular works (*Lord of the Rings*, *Narnia*), the disillusionment of post-war Britain, and proffered as an antidote an ingredient of the medieval romance, which celebrated the heroism of the little man and looked wistfully back to the Middle Ages as an age of faith. Powicke, for his part, studied—and admired—the genteel aristocracy of the later Middle Ages.

In "American Pie," Cantor details the careers of Charles Homer Haskins and Joseph Strayer, both students of administrative history and advocates of statist rationalism and both participants in the American institutions formed by the Wilsonian vision of social democracy. Strayer was replaced as the architect of the Princeton history department by Natalie Zemon Davis, a 1960s Marxist, about whom Cantor observes:

[I]rrationality, disorder, and delinquency are the focus of [her] attention and the behavior patterns to be endorsed. Davis merited her academic celebrity. Hers was the most self-consciously deconstructive

American mind ever to apply itself to the study of early European society. She was the great anti-Wilsonian historical thinker.

THREE CONCLUDING chapters close the book. "After the Fall" describes the Catholic medievalists David Knowles and Etienne Gilson, and their ambiguous positions in church and academy. The complicated Knowles, monk and monastic historian, was in Cantor's view the finer scholar; Gilson held to a "naive Thomist integrationism" that, Cantor thinks, well served the ecclesiastical desire for demonstrable continuity, most particularly in ecclesiastical institutions. Their temperaments colored their work: Knowles was a radical Augustinian and valued sanctity alone; Gilson saw the good of institutions. Each wrote his medieval history from his particular point of view; each represented a contradictory element within Catholicism. Cantor thinks church-sponsored history absolutist, and historians, he insists, must be free of absolutism. Yet he has an almost religious devotion to the idea that history, particularly medieval history, contains within itself the seeds for the spiritual renewal of the postmodern world.

Perhaps most heroic of the subjects of Cantor's book is R. W. Southern, elegiacally named "The Once and Future King." The "heir of the Oxford fantasists," Southern, in his *Making of the Middle Ages* and in subsequent works, has studied religious sensibility in the twelfth century, especially in its romantic and individual expressions. Unlike the historians who emphasized material progress in the Middle Ages, Southern

immersed himself in both the glory and the mess of medieval sensibility. He placed in the foreground . . . the religious feelings of the Middle Ages, and as the postmodern era moves into the twenty-first century, the relevance of medieval spirituality rather than rationality

will become more meaningful to the survivors of the age of Bush and Gorbachev.

The last chapter, "Outriders," is a collection of miscellanea: Johan Huizinga, Eileen Power, Michael Moisse Postan, Carl Erdmann, and Mommsen, the last an exile from the Nazis and a mentor whose despair and death Cantor poignantly recounts. In this chapter, a final eight pages reveals Cantor's theology of history. A remarkable, startling, and hopeful evocation of what he calls retromedievalism, it witnesses to a historian unafraid to break ranks and do the impermissible—to prophesy. In these pages, Cantor's voice echoes that of the novelist Walker Percy and the moral philosopher Alisdair MacIntyre in their differing *vaticinia* of the future inspiration of the West, after the destruction of modernity, by some still-unknown holy man.

Cantor believes that the present crisis in the university will only deepen, as will the general alienation from both capitalism and socialism as value systems. But in the field of medieval studies, the study of medieval literature may well flourish to renew the work of the founders "in which the Middle Ages were determined as a cultural structure, moral signification, and therapeutic recourse." Unlike the romantics of the early nineteenth century, who used medieval culture as a shield against the discomforts of the Industrial Revolution, future retromedievalists will have at their disposal a far more detailed account of the thoughts, the hopes, and (though Cantor does not use this term) the doctrines of the Middle Ages. Those collections will be our inspiration.

Cantor himself particularly favors the doctrine of the Incarnation, which preconditioned medieval people to find "the ideal within the material, the beautiful within the ugly, the moral and peaceful in the midst of violence and disorder." Cantor's retromedievalism he calls anti-statist, in the sense that it rejects the regulatory and welfare state; on the personal level, it rejects the scientific habits of modernism and its

rebellious offspring, counterculturalism. If, he thinks, the all-too-familiar list of global catastrophes can be avoided, along with the medieval disjunction between intellectual and spiritual excellence and material squalor, then the study of and identification with medieval culture in the postmodern West can give birth to a new history, rather than the end of history.

A palpable hope suffuses the final lines of Cantor's book, and this, too, explains why this Plutarch of medieval studies has told his story so cheerfully:

We must have faith that God and fortune, as well as reason and the lessons of experience, will avoid [the above] hazards and allow the flourishing of a benign and creative retromedieval moment.

Like the Roman Empire, the modern age will crumble from the crack of inordinate greatness beyond the interest of the many and the desire of the privileged few to sustain, and in the murky streets of ruined cities and meeting grounds of a billion humble habitations, our heroes and saints will show us how to begin history anew.

Cantor hopes that the people of the Christian Middle Ages, sympathetically understood through the work of the great modern medievalists, will rouse the imaginations of their descendants in the West. For all Cantor's suspicion of the church, and his scholar's love of privacy and independence, this is a conviction that is akin to that of Christopher Dawson and—to take a living and influential philosopher—Karol Wojtyła, better known as John Paul II. Cantor has given us these biographies of medievalists to fulfill an ancient purpose of learning—to warn, to edify, to inspire.

BRIEFLY NOTED

JUDAS ISCARIOT AND THE MYTH OF JEWISH EVIL. By HYAM MACCOBY. *Free Press*. 213 pp. \$22.95.

Maccoby is noted, or notorious, for his argument, made here once again, that anti-Semitism is inherent in Christian faith. Judas Iscariot, he claims, is for Christians the demonic symbol of Judaism, which will come as news to almost all, if not all, Christians. "The real and only permanent solution to the problem of antisemitism," Maccoby writes, "is to dismantle the Pauline Christian myth of atonement" and what he calls "the mythic resurrection." In sum, in order to end anti-Semitism, Christians should give up Christianity. Maccoby's proposal is as offensive as his reading of history is fanciful. (Maccoby is a disciple of Leo Baeck, on whom see Alan Mittelman's "Christianity in the Mirror of Jewish Thought" in this issue.)

GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS AND THE LANGUAGE OF MYSTERY. By VIRGINIA RIDLEY ELLIS. *University of Missouri Press*. 352 pp. \$35.

A demanding but rewarding book that takes Hopkins for what he was, a "deeply committed priest and Christian poet, for whom faith was life, and art the voice of the instrument of faith." Mystery in the title is meant theologically; it designates not a vague sense of something unknown, but, in Hopkins' words, "an incomprehensible certainty" such as the Incarnation.

PREACHER: BILLY SUNDAY AND BIG TIME AMERICAN EVANGELISM. By ROGER A. BRUNS. *Norton*. 351 pp. \$22.95.

A very readable and generally sympathetic account of a revivalist who reached his apogee in 1915 and set the pattern for much of the mass evangelism of the future, including the ministry of Billy Graham. In view of the vitality of evangelical Christianity today, suggests Bruns, it

would seem that Billy Sunday rather than H. L. Mencken or Clarence Darrow was much closer to understanding the American character.

THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS: WHO IS HAPPY AND WHY. By DAVID G. MYERS. *Morrow*. 288 pp. \$20.

With almost a hundred pages of notes, the reader may expect from the professor of social psychology at Michigan's Hope College a tome of offputting technicality. In fact, the text could hardly be more accessible, as it is also commonsensical and, all in all, edifying. (It is probably a publicist's nightmare to have a book called edifying.) Happiness understood as a sense of well-being joined to serving others is intricately, and sometimes confusedly, connected with religious faith, according to Myers and the many authorities he cites. Although disclaiming any attempt to recommend a particular faith, the beliefs, attitudes, and habits described by the author are unmistakably Christian in character. A book for the personal and parish library.

BIOETHICS AND SECULAR HUMANISM: THE SEARCH FOR A COMMON MORALITY. By H. TRISTRAM ENGELHARDT, JR. *Trinity Press International*. 206 pp. \$29.95.

A professor of medical ethics at Baylor contends for a version of "secular humanism" that does the work some would assign to "natural law." The common morality of the subtitle remains entirely procedural, as moral "truths" grounded in religion and other sources apparently can have no place in a vocabulary appropriate to the "moral strangers" who comprise the modern world.

RACING TOWARD 2001: THE FORCES SHAPING AMERICA'S RELIGIOUS FUTURE. By RUSSELL CHANDLER. *Zondervan/HarperCollins*. 367 pp. \$17.99.

A distinguished religion specialist with the *Los Angeles Times* offers

a journalistic tour d'horizon of our religio-cultural situation and what it portends for the third millennium. It is in the nature of this genre that the tone is a bit breathless and the generalizations very broad indeed, but the book can serve as a useful introduction to some of the agitations and the players who would give shape to the spiritual spasms of the age.

BUT WAS IT JUST? REFLECTIONS ON THE MORALITY OF THE PERSIAN GULF WAR. Edited by DAVID E. DeCosse. *Doubleday*. 132 pp. \$15.

The views of Stanley Hauerwas and George Weigel on the question posed by the title are familiar to readers of this journal. In addition to Jean Bethke Elshtain, also a regular contributor here, this fine little book contains essays by Sari Nusseibeh and Michael Walzer. Times of crisis and heated debate can confuse clear thinking, or give salutary specificity to general theories. This book does the latter. It will, we believe, have a lasting and important place in any library that takes seriously questions of war and peace.

HEAVEN ON EARTH: DISPATCHES FROM AMERICA'S SPIRITUAL FRONTIER. By MICHAEL D'ANTONIO. *Crown*. 422 pp. \$20.

"Religion has value when it enriches individual and community life, when it makes sense of suffering and makes death bearable, even meaningful." With a firm grip on that dogma, journalist D'Antonio goes out to discover the wildly various worlds of the New Age. Crystals, channeling, mystic baseball, and folks who know that they are the new incarnation of the Absolute can all be "meaningful," he reports. No doubt. The dustjacket has Garry Wills saying that this is "an intelligent survey of modern evangelicals," which is surely a blurb for another book. Bill Moyers says he loves *Heaven on Earth*. Contra the subtitle, this is not about the spiritual frontier. It is an offputtingly gushy report on the

verdant marginalia that has been a constant of American history.

PRAYERS OF THE MARTYRS. Compiled and translated by DUANE W. H. ARNOLD. Foreword by MADELEINE L'ENGLE. *Zondervan*. 122 pp. \$12.95.

A beautiful collection of prayers of Christian martyrs arranged for devotional purposes. The prayers range over the whole of Christian history, including many from the familiar Christian figures (Ignatius, Polycarp, Cyprian), but some from little-known heroes of the faith, Jonas of Beth-Isa (fourth-century Persia), Noel Pinot (eighteenth-century France), Gabra Michael (nineteenth-century Ethiopia), Yona Kanamuzeyi (twentieth-century Rwanda).

VOICES FROM JERUSALEM: JEWS AND CHRISTIANS REFLECT ON THE HOLY LAND. Edited by DAVID BURRELL and YEHEZKEL LANDAU. *Paulist Press*. 177 pp. \$9.95.

Nine essays, some with a distinctly anti-Zionist (anti-Israel) bias, but representing a range of influential views both within and about the Holy Land. Burrell teaches theology at Notre Dame and Landau is director of Oz V'Shalom-Netivot Shalom, a religious peace movement in Israel.

GOD AND VIOLENCE: THE CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE OF GOD IN DIALOGUE WITH MYTHS AND OTHER RELIGIONS. By GEORG BAUDLER. *Templegate*. 366 pp. \$19.95 paper.

Dialogue is the key word as this German author engagingly moves back and forth between world religions and the Christian Scriptures. He instructively shows how human history has constructed a pantheon of nasty gods that contrast sharply with the biblical God of covenantal mercy. The author concludes, however, with the hope for a "harmonization" of world religions that, despite his intentions, seems slushily sentimental. Nonetheless, this is an informative study attractively

presented.

THE NEW BIRTH OF CHRISTIANITY: WHY RELIGION PERSISTS IN A SCIENTIFIC AGE. By RICHARD A. NENNEMAN. *HarperCollins*. 198 pp. \$19.

As the institutions of Christian Science reel under a succession of crises, one of its top officials calmly explains why Mary Baker Eddy got it right the first time. The imperturbability comports nicely with the doctrine. Just set your mind, says Nenneman, on "the simple Christianity of Christ Jesus." Apparently there are still a 100,000 or so Christian Scientists who believe it is that simple.

AMERICAN LAWYERS AND THEIR COMMUNITIES: ETHICS IN THE LEGAL PROFESSION. By THOMAS L. SHAFFER. *University of Notre Dame Press*. 272 pp. \$24.95.

Written "with Mary L. Shaffer," this volume should not be confused with innumerable volumes on "legal ethics" that are designed to keep lawyers out of trouble with the law. The Shaffers, rather, examine different moral models of the lawyer, concluding with the ways in which a confident assertion of Christian and Jewish particularities might influence positively the practice of law in America. The book should be of interest and benefit to readers interested in the legal profession and the meaning of professionalism in our culture.

INTERPRETATION AND OBEDIENCE: FROM FAITHFUL READING TO FAITHFUL LIVING. By WALTER BRUEGGEMAN. *Fortress*. 324 pp. \$14.95 paper.

The author is a much-published Old Testament scholar at Columbia Seminary in Atlanta, and he here collects some of his commentaries and exhortations that intend to be faithful to the title. Regrettably, repeated references to liberation from "the

system” of nationalism, consumerism, imperialism, etc. lack the specificity and subtlety that might enable readers to know what biblical faithfulness means in their lives, if they do not happen to be Old Testament scholars publishing books.

THE REFORMATION AND LIBERATION THEOLOGY: INSIGHTS FOR THE CHALLENGES OF TODAY. By RICHARD SHAULL. *Westminster*. 144 pp. \$11.95 paper.

A veteran liberationist of Princeton Theological Seminary contends that

the sundry Protestant reformations demand and make possible a radically new social order. The somewhat jejune subtitle reflects a style that does not feel obliged to challenge what, on the ideological left, are taken to be “the challenges of today.”

Sacrifice

This slender stem—
the wax-imprisoned
soul
of candle's being—
Ignited,
starts the
slow
descent
toward death;
Converting
its encasing flesh
to molten drops
that hang
like tears upon a cheek,
the painful price
of
making life
more
luminous,
Until—
substance spent,
cylindrical shell dissolved—
it makes its final peace
with night,
consumed
by its own passion
to shed
light.

Donald DeMarco

Richard
John
Neuhaus

The Public Square

A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life

Who You Are

After two full years of publication, we thought it time to survey our subscribers and the findings are now in. Of course such a survey cannot tell us who you are in all your irreducible uniqueness, but it does offer a profile of subscribers to *FIRST THINGS*. We thought you might be as interested in some of the details as we are.

We'll take the items as they come in the report, not necessarily in order of importance. And please note that we're talking about *subscribers*. As we shall see, there are many more readers than subscribers. First, you (collectively speaking) are 84 percent male and 16 percent female. That could be misleading, since many subscribers are "Mr. and Mrs." and it seems that the husbands generally responded to the survey. As to age, 49 percent of you are under 55 years old and 51 percent over, with 29 percent being over 65. That pretty well fits demographic expectations. Sixty-nine percent are married, 26 percent are single, 4 percent are widowed, and one percent say they are divorced, which presumably means divorced and not remarried. So you are, all in all, a stable and mature representation of the human species.

And you are an exceedingly well-educated group. Ninety-eight percent have been to college, 33 percent have a Ph.D. or its equivalent (D. Min., M.D., S.T.D.), 31 percent have a masters degree, and another 10 percent have been or are in graduate studies. So 74 percent have gone beyond the college undergraduate degree. Most of you seem to be in moderate financial circumstances, especially when we consider that the average is dragged down by the many clergy subscribers. (Not their fault, of course.) Fifty-seven percent of you have an annual household income of \$54,000 or less, while 43 percent have \$55,000 or more. Twenty-nine percent report an income of \$70,000 or more.

As to occupation, by far the largest group is composed of clergy (29 percent). If we add to the clergy those of you who are teachers, college

professors, editors, and writers, fully 45 percent of you are professionally engaged in communicating ideas to others. Other occupations that register 4 percent or more are business people, medical doctors, lawyers, and full-time students. Twenty-one percent of you are retired, which is somewhat less than might be expected. Religiously, you are 54 percent Protestant and 40 percent Catholic, with no other group over much more than one percent except for the 2 percent that report no religious affiliation. We were surprised by how few Jewish subscribers there are. Given the level of Jewish participation in the programs of the institute and in *FIRST THINGS*, we had expected more than a few hundred. Upon reexamination, however, it appears that we have not targeted Jewish audiences in our promotion of the journal. We will remedy that in the future.

Of the 54 percent of you who are Protestant, the largest denominational representation is Presbyterian (25 percent), followed by Lutherans (18 percent), Episcopalians (14 percent), and Baptists (7 percent). Twenty-three percent belong to churches other than the eight major denominations listed in the questionnaire. (When we do such a survey again, we will include more denominations in order to get a better fix on religious affiliations.) Of the 57 percent of you who hold a leadership office in your church, 18 percent hold an office at the regional level and 9 percent at the national. Fifty-nine percent of you have made public addresses in the past year, and 56 percent wrote your newspaper editor or congressional representative at least once. You are obviously people who have something to say (as we well know from your correspondence with *FIRST THINGS*).

Reading With Care

Twenty-five percent of you read every issue of the journal cover to cover, and 53 percent say they read

“most” of every issue. As to favorite departments, articles come out on top (23 percent) and The Public Square rates second (20 percent). The other departments (correspondence, editorials, opinions, and book reviews) are pretty evenly preferred. Only 4 percent say that the poetry is their favorite department, but that’s not surprising, considering that relatively little space is devoted to it. You obviously read the journal with care. Sixty-six percent devote three or more hours to each issue, and the average time spent on each issue is 3.4 hours. We are told that how people dispose of a publication says something about how they value it. So we are encouraged that 62 percent of you save each issue, 31 percent pass it along to others, and only 7 percent discard after reading.

There is this question of the “multiplier effect.” That is, how many readers, as distinct from subscribers, are there? Fifty-seven percent of you share your issues with at least one other person, 26 percent of you with two to eight or more persons. There is a great deal of copying selected articles for classroom use and study groups. (May we gently remind you that you should get permission if you do that on a regular basis?) Then too, many subscriptions go to local or institutional libraries, where it may be assumed there are multiple readers. (We really need more library subscriptions. It would be much appreciated if you would check with any libraries with which you may have connections to make sure they subscribe.) It is hard to put a precise figure on the multiplier effect. We are advised that an informed estimate is four or five to one. In that case, 20,000 subscribers translates into 80,000 or 100,000 readers. Needless to say, we would like to have 100,000 *subscribers*. As it is, however, in its first two years FIRST THINGS has set publishing records in the rapidity of its growth and the loyalty of its readership (as indicated by, inter alia, renewals), and that is very gratifying.

Buying With Zest

You are voracious readers and buyers of books. Ninety-six percent of you read at least one book per month, 48 percent read three or more books per month, and 26 percent read five or more. Eighty-four percent buy five or more books per year, and 36 percent buy twenty or more books. The *average* number of books purchased per year is 13.5. The subjects of greatest interest in your reading are (ranked in order) religion, history, theology, social issues, politics, philosophy, and biography. Eighty-two percent have joined a book club at some time, and 46 percent are members of one or more book clubs at present.

As to your favorite leisure activities, reading comes out well ahead, with music, travel, and

sports following in that order. Twenty-nine percent say classical is your favorite music, with (in order) jazz, opera, folk, and “easy listening” making strong showings. Eight percent list rock music as their favorite. (That’s alright, we try to be tolerant.) Sixty-one percent of you purchased five or more compact discs, records, or tapes in the past year, and 21 percent purchased fifteen or more. The *average* music purchase per subscriber per year is 8.7.

Now we come to an oddity. While you are voracious book readers, you apparently are not so big on some of the periodicals that we expected to show up with greater frequency. Fifteen percent subscribe to *National Review* and, aside from newsmagazines, the next highest is 8 percent subscribing to the *New York Times Book Review*. *The New Yorker*, *Commentary*, and *Atlantic Monthly* each get 6 percent, *America* and *Christian Century* get five percent, and *Commonweal* 2 percent. Other publications mentioned with some frequency are *New Republic*, the *New York Review of Books*, *Harpers*, and *Public Interest*. By an oversight, *Christianity Today* was not listed in the questionnaire. Anecdotal evidence suggests that a good many of our evangelical subscribers also subscribe to *Christianity Today*, and we will be sure to include it when we do this again.

Keeping Good Company

To judge by the many comments that came back with the questionnaires, many of you once subscribed to these other magazines but, for whatever reason, dropped them. Again and again, you say that FIRST THINGS is exactly the publication you had been waiting for. You should know that the editor in chief had to caution his colleagues against letting your many fulsome comments on the journal go to their heads (the editor in chief, of course, having his ego well under control). Many of you mention that you have given gift subscriptions. That is very important to the growth of the journal and we hope others will follow your good example.

There were also a few criticisms. Some say that the articles tend to be too long. We try to give authors as much space as is necessary to present effectively the argument or viewpoint in question. Authors tend to think that we cut too much—more precisely, that we cut *their* articles too much. There is no iron rule about length, but we will do our best, keeping in mind that others say they like the longer articles that let authors explore thoroughly the subject at hand. Others say that the journal is harder to read than need be because there is too much print on the page. We have attended to that. If you look closely, you will see that, beginning with the May issue, there is more

white space, which we hope will make the reading easier.

We are told that the response to the survey was remarkably high. Of a little under one thousand sent out at random, more than half, as of this writing, were completed and returned. From the returned questionnaires and the accompanying comments, we feel very good indeed about the company that we're keeping. We, the editors, hope that you will continue to be as happy as you say you are with *FIRST THINGS*. And, oh yes, please do tell your friends.

FT

A WELL-KNOWN DIRTY LITTLE SECRET

The United States has the highest incarceration rate in the world, with South Africa being second. At a private luncheon a while back, a mayoral candidate in New York remarked, "Politicians, myself included, have not found a way to talk about crime without being accused of racism." Of the 1.1 million inmates in America, almost half are black. Black males are 6 percent of the general population and about 47 percent of the prison population. A 1990 study found that, on any given day, almost one in four black men in America between the ages of 20 and 29 is either in prison or on parole or probation. (Of all felons, black and white, sentenced to probation, 43 percent are arrested again on felony charges within three years.)

The mayoral candidate is right about the perceived linkage between crime and race. Note, for instance, the continuing brouhaha over the Bush campaign's Willy Horton ad in the 1988 presidential race—an ad that made no reference to race, it being the Democrats who made an issue of the fact that Horton was black. When politicians are intimidated into not addressing the question of crime for fear of being dubbed racists, they play into the hands of real racists who do not hesitate to posture as courageous in "exposing" what they depict as the dirty little secret of the racial factor. The racial factor is no secret to almost all Americans, black and white. Blacks, who are the main victims of black crime, are more oriented to "law and order" than most whites when it comes to addressing these problems. Those black "leaders" who blame crime on a racist society are too often spinelessly accommodated by white journalists, politicians, and clergy who are

terrified of being accused of racism.

To take account of race is not racist. Not to take account of it is to expand the corrupting influence of mendacity in our political culture, and provides an easy target for those who are racist. Although enormously important, crime is but one part of the pathology of the urban underclass. (See "What Should We Do About the Poor?" April). High among the moral imperatives in our public life is the need for clergy, and especially black clergy, to create a climate in which crime can be addressed with candor but without racial rancor. Admittedly, that is a tall order. In the worlds of political and religious leadership, very few dare to respond to it.

FT

THE "BLACK POPE" ON THE VIRTUES OF COMMUNISM

Much has been written in the last two decades, both from the right and the left, about the transformation of the Society of Jesus, better known as the Jesuits. The left has generally cheered, and the right lamented, that the Jesuits are no longer the "shock troops of the pope" that Ignatius Loyola established them to be. In Central America, but not only there, Jesuits were in the forefront of "liberationist struggles," employing a mix of Christianity and "Marxist analysis" that has been sharply criticized by the Holy See. Many of them are still engaged in that dubious enterprise, although it is generally acknowledged, even by the Jesuits involved, that liberation theology is undergoing an "identity crisis" in the aftermath of the collapse of Communism.

In this country, the Society is seen to be insisting more and more upon the toeing of a party line. One Jesuit who publicly criticized his superiors' vocal opposition to the Gulf War was dismissed from his university post. Others have been cautioned by superiors that public dissent from the Society's political positions will not be tolerated. Internal censorship in support of the Society's turn to the left is variously explained. The former Jesuit Malachi Martin has gained a good deal of attention with popular books alleging a grand conspiracy against the leadership of John Paul II. Others contend that the turn to the left is much exaggerated, that it involves mainly a few "radicalized" mavericks who receive an inordinate amount of media attention.

A somewhat different perspective on the guiding mindset of the Society is obtained by reading

various official and quasi-official sources, such as *Civiltà Cattolica*, the Jesuit-edited paper issued from Rome (see George Weigel's "A Roman Cautionary Tale," April). For many years it was thought that major statements in CC were vetted by no less an authority than the pope, but it now seems more plausible to many that the editors are countering papal positions on crucial questions. Or one might read the statements of the Superior General of the Jesuits, who used to be called "the black pope."

Following the recent Synod of European Bishops, the Superior General, Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, wrote a longish letter to Major Superiors of the Society, reflecting on what it all might mean. It is, for the most part, a rather downbeat letter. The collapse of Communism is discussed in terms of "the surprising events" that led to "the upheaval in Eastern Europe." Fr. Kolvenbach notes that the bishops from the former Communist countries portray themselves as the martyrs who suffered under "the antitheism imposed by the Communist regime." Fr. Kolvenbach seems to be not much impressed, noting that the church in the East has not been very good at resisting "the challenges of a secularization which was invading it." In general, the view of the Superior General is that the future is "full of worry and uncertainty." This is, he makes clear, no time to celebrate the end of Communism.

He explains that the Synod reinforced the view that terms such as "evangelization" and "communion" refer to the promotion of justice and social change. The "Gospel" does not simply include these political tasks; these tasks are the only components of the Gospel, of evangelization, and of communion that he mentions. Some might describe this as a remarkably a-theological notion of the Church's mission, but of course that would be protested by those who have exhaustively "translated" theology into politics. Perhaps the most noteworthy part of Fr. Kolvenbach's reflection is this: "Now that a certain form of Communism has lost its credibility, the poor, who may be a whole world—the third world—have lost something like a defender and are exposed, with no defense, to forms of new capitalism such as an unlimited free market economy." The end of Communism, he says, has created a "void" that the Church, and Jesuits in particular, will have to fill.

The notion that Communism was in any way the defender of the poor and that capitalism is the enemy of the poor could hardly be more antithetical to the entire argument of John Paul II's 1991 encyclical, *Centesimus Annus* (see "The Economics of Human Freedom," August-September 1991). Quite apart from the question of

adherence to papal teaching, however, Fr. Kolvenbach's statement is a striking departure from adherence to common sense and historical truth. Where, one might ask, has Communism been a defender of the poor, or even "something like" a defender of the poor? In Russia and the subject states of the former evil empire? Did the entire world, save Fr. Kolvenbach, miss the masses of boat people fleeing neighboring countries in order to get into Communist Vietnam? Did the poor—including the immigrants in Europe about whom Fr. Kolvenbach expresses such concern—risk their lives to cross the Berlin Wall into the East? Have hundreds of thousands of people undertaken death-defying ventures to live under the revolution in Cuba?

That the Superior General of the Society of Jesus expresses regret, at least implicitly, over the passing of a Communism that the Pope has explicitly called both "evil" and an "empire"—and which the Pope, more than any other single factor, was instrumental in undermining—should not go unnoticed. It may suggest that the frequently bizarre doings of the Society in recent decades have less to do with grand conspiracies or radicalized mavericks than with a measure of muddleheadedness at the top.

FT

HOW TO HANDLE TOUGH QUESTIONS

Parishes of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) are debating a fifty-five-page draft study of sexuality and Christian faith. A final draft is supposed to be ready for the 1993 national assembly of the 5.2 million member body. Bishop Herbert Chilstrom, executive head of the ELCA, is among those worried that the church may be headed for a wrenchingly divisive battle, similar to the conflicts that have wracked Presbyterians and Methodists, especially over the question of homosexuality. In a recent interview he suggested that it might be better to let the church deal with sexuality in its own time and in its own way, without the necessity of voting things up or down. "That is exactly what happened with the issue of divorce," Chilstrom said. "In the field of divorce, a sea of change has taken place. We have bishops who are divorced. That would have been unheard of ten years ago. We've become realistic, acknowledging that there are some marriages that should not continue." He suggests that, in time,

the church might become equally realistic about homosexuality, refusing to judge the question "by aberrations among homosexuals." Homophobia, we are given to understand, gets in the way of calm deliberation.

The bishop has a point. Among Lutherans, as with other oldline churches, it was not long ago that divorce was cause for removal from the church's ministry. Today the divorce rate among clergy in such churches is about the same as in the general population. It is not that unusual for pastors and seminary professors to be divorced several times, in some instances having swapped spouses. So what's the big deal about divorce? Many people have difficulty remembering that not long ago these churches spoke with apparent seriousness about the indissolubility of marriage as a sacred bond. "What God has joined together," and all that. As the bishop says, no decision was made to change the church's teaching on marriage and divorce. It just happened.

And so ten years from now out-of-the-closet homosexuals will be ordained to the ministry and it will all seem quite natural. What was the big deal about homosexuality? folks will ask. The trick, as Bishop Chilstrom suggests, is to avoid forcing people to make decisions about what is true and false, what is right and wrong, and other institutionally disruptive questions. In sum, go with the flow. Unless churches learn to transcend the outdated dichotomies of true/false and right/wrong, they will never know the institutional peace that can only be securely grounded in theological and moral indifference. As the bishop says, "a sea of change" is underway.

FT

SENSITIVITY AND INSENSIBILITY AT HARVARD

The same issue of the *Harvard Crimson* contains two stories on different developments driven by one principle. The first is that the Civil Liberties Union of Harvard (CLUH, a kind of hard-core ACLU within the ACLU) is pushing for coed rooms. Jolyon A. Silversmith of that organization says that, in assigning student rooms, it shouldn't make any difference that "the friends they want to live with are of the opposite sex." After all, students of the same sex are permitted to room together and, from what one hears of Harvard these days, that is likely to be just as libidinous. Apparently the administration is listening to the

CLUH proposal with sensitivity. The second story is that a tutor at Dunster House is pushing to overturn a practice in which one toaster in the house is reserved for kosher use. It is, he claims, an establishment of religion.

Of the proposal that boys and girls should be allowed to room together, CLUH says, "In general we found students' responses to be very positive." The tutor's anti-toaster campaign is meeting with greater resistance. It seems that some students detect something suspiciously anti-Jewish about it, although the tutor pleads innocent, pointing out that he's against all religions. The principle that drives both developments, of course, is that justice requires absolute nondiscrimination. Incidentals such as sex and religion must not be permitted to impinge upon equality of treatment. The Dunster tutor allows that Jews can't help being Jews since they're born that way, "but they choose to eat kosher." The university is thereby, presumably, violating the constitution of the American Way by endorsing their religious choice.

On the coed room campaign, we wonder if CLUH should not examine the problem more carefully. What is this business about respecting the choice of "the friends they want to live with"? Surely nothing could be more discriminatory than selecting some people as friends while not selecting others. A closer look, we cannot help but suspect, would reveal that factors such as "looksism," "ableism," "heterosexism," and "being-a-pleasant-person-to-be-withism" all enter into student decisions about whom they want to room with. The insensitive may dismiss the seriousness of such concerns, but do they know how it feels to be the victim of "selectivism" when you're not chosen by the person you wanted to room with? We expect better of CLUH. Maybe an affirmative program for the victims of selectivism. Better yet, room assignment by lottery.

It's important to be sensitive, but if sensitivity to human particulars gets in the way of justice, sensitivity will just have to go. And those Jewish kids who insist on being Jewish can go live with their own kind. They're lucky that this secular university lets them attend classes. That they want to live with the rest of us is a bit too much. Equality requires that they be equal like us, which means that they be like us. Such is the elevated level of moral discourse in the Craven Old World that is Harvard. For this parents, desperately hoping that their child will be admitted, are eager to pay \$30,000 or more per year. There's a Harvard parent born every minute, as Phineas Taylor Barnum did not live to observe.

FT

LEFT OVER FROM THE SIXTIES

The Campaign for Human Development (CHD) is an annual collection supported by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (see *The Public Square*, January and April). It raises about ten million dollars per year, which is of course a very small part of the Church's myriad programs aimed at meeting human needs. When, however, CHD is criticized, as it has been criticized by many over the years, the standard reaction is that the critics are undermining the Church's ministry to the poor. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

CHD is a program narrowly targeted to fund political activism of sundry sorts. Its official statement of funding policies defines the kind of programs to which CHD will give money. "Projects must work to bring about institutional change by attacking the basic social, economic, and political causes of poverty." The notion of the Church as change agent, redolent of the 1960s from which CHD emerged, focuses on "modification of existing laws and/or policies" and the "establishment of alternative structures and/or redistribution of decision-making powers." In a manner that would undoubtedly surprise many who contribute to CHD, the official guidelines explicitly exclude funding programs that provide "direct service" to poor people.

Then there is this under "Projects That Do Not Meet CHD Criteria": "Projects controlled by government (federal, state, local), educational, or ecclesiastical bodies." CHD does not fund projects sponsored by, among others, the Catholic Church. Thus, a Catholic school in Harlem cannot receive CHD help with its community programs, while secular groups agitating for "systemic change" in the country's social and political order can and do receive large amounts of money. It is a truly curious policy, since CHD is typically presented to the people in the pews as a program that supports the Church's work for and with the poor. A measure of confusion is understandable, and may help to explain the relatively tepid response of the people to the annual CHD appeal. Twenty years after CHD was established, ideas about "basic social, economic, and political causes of poverty" have dramatically changed, and it is perhaps past time for the bishops to reevaluate a program that is based upon the ideological certitudes of an earlier era. With or without such a formal reevaluation, careful attention should be paid to truth in advertising when presenting the CHD appeal to the Catholic people.

FT

THE UNCLOUDED ACADEMY

At the University of Toledo, a state university, a chair in Catholic thought has been established through private funding. It has stirred something of a brouhaha. The university newspaper huffs: "UT President Frank Horton recently said this is the 'first endowed professorship in Catholic thought at a public university in the United States.' This just may be because other public universities in the United States have refused to sell professorships in any religious discipline in order to maintain a curriculum rooted in objective thought, unclouded by religious beliefs of any kind." The paper's eagerness to preserve the unclouded discourse of contemporary academe is touching.

The Ohio ACLU finds the precedent "troubling" but notes that the chair is only for electives and therefore "there's not as strong a case for an establishment clause violation." The ACLU spokesperson continues, "If it's true that the course need not be taken by any student at UT in order to obtain his or her undergraduate degree, there is a much lesser element of coercion." As, for instance, in none at all. An alumnus grumbles in the newspaper that you can't believe the claim that the chair will not be used for proselytizing. "Five of the instructors are Catholic priests. How can they present Catholicism in an unbiased manner?" The alumnus should be reassured by the knowledge that among the five priests who will serve as initial lecturers are Fathers Richard McBrien, Richard McCormick, and Arthur McGovern, none of whom is thought to be excessively biased in favor of official Church teaching.

If the Catholic chair is allowed, opines this unhappy alumnus, "Even humanists and atheists may establish professorships." We, too, would find it strange if in the contemporary university humanists and atheists had to resort to private funding and limit themselves to elective courses. The question, of course, is whether Catholic thought or, for that matter, Protestant or Jewish thought is a subject worthy of attention in higher education, and, if it is, whether it can only be taught by people who are certified as not believing in what they teach. As the ACLU and its like never fail to remind us, the price of maintaining the wall of separation between education and the university is, like that of liberty itself, eternal vigilance.

FT

AFTER THE LONG MARCH

A colleague reports on a postprandial stroll in Greenwich Village with some friends on the evening of Passion Sunday. They happened on a store named "Condomania." In the window was Rocky the Rabbit, done up as an Easter bunny, and urging the public to "Keep Your Carrot Covered." On sale were Easter eggs to be filled with condoms colored to the season. When it comes to discerning new eruptions of the sacred, the distance from the Village to putatively serious theological reflection is not so great as one might expect.

For instance we came across materials on the very creative doings around "HIV/AIDS Awareness at Harvard Divinity School." The HDS students are producing, for instance, a musical parody of "The Wizard of Oz" that is titled "The Wizard of A.I.D.S." (Aware Individuals Demanding Survival). Then there is the very venerable Harvard institution of the Weekly Dean's Tea. The theme of a recent tea was "Sacred Condoms," and the announcement says that displays will be handled in order, through familiarity, to relieve anxieties about imaginative sex. The tea is followed by a "Blessing of Sacred Condoms." On display are "sculptures" made of stuffed condoms. There is, for example, a "C. Everett Koop Doll" celebrating the former Surgeon General's contributions to "AIDS awareness." What ten years ago was the calculated outrageousness of the Village and San Francisco (remember Sister Boom-Boom?) has now found a home in the prim Ivy League parlors of Protestant sociability. Forget the long march through the institutions. That was yesterday. Today it's dancing on the corpses.

FT

NAMING GOD

Brian Wren is a great rewriter of hymns and liturgies. He urges the invoking of "strong Mother God," "warm Father God," "old aching God," and so forth. Says Mr. Wren: "The fact that Jesus called God Father doesn't mean he was teaching us to use that name for time and eternity . . . the biblical tradition is that God cannot be contained in human language." Perfectly true, of course. God cannot be *contained* in any human language or concept. It does not follow, however, that any language or any concept designates the One whom

Christians call God. In his self-revelation, God has denoted Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the Father of Jesus. The revealed name of God, according to historic Christianity, is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. That is how He is to be named and addressed for all time and—since God's self-revelation must correspond with eternal truth—for eternity as well. Although in the Coming Kingdom we will see him face to face (1 Corinthians 13) and will presumably have a fuller understanding and a better language. Even then, if the revelation is to be trusted, He will always be the One whom Jesus called Father.

The ploy employed by Wren and others has become very familiar in recent years. It used to be said that liberal revisionists denied the transcendence of God, focusing exclusively on His immanence. It is now more commonly the case, however, that they accentuate His transcendence—His utter otherness and unnameability—in a manner that denies His self-revelation in history. In either case, it leaves human beings in the position of conceiving and naming God in whatever way they find "meaningful." Whether the accent is on immanence or transcendence, the result is Ludwig Feuerbach's God made in our own image. The question is not whether God can be contained in human language or thought. He cannot. The question is whether our language and thought is obedient to whom He has declared Himself to be.

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MORE ON WHAT TO DO ABOUT THE POOR

In the wake of the Los Angeles explosion, as is quite predictable, much is being said about poverty, race, and welfare. Some of what is being said is far from predictable, however. For instance, *The New Republic* ponders the dilemma of the urban underclass and concludes: "If we are to break through this culture of idleness, poverty, illegitimacy, and crime, we have to cut off its lifeline." Its lifeline is welfare, and *TNR* proposes replacing welfare in all its forms (including Aid to Families with Dependent Children) with the "offer of a government-provided job" to the able-bodied poor. This proposal, we are told, is spelled out in detail by *TNR* Senior Editor Mickey Kaus in a forthcoming book, *The End of Equality*.

TNR continues: "Our conviction that something this drastic must be attempted is

motivated by belief that what is at stake in the events in Los Angeles is the entire notion of a common American citizenship that can transcend race and class and connect one civic obligation to another civic need. The liberal welfare state, for all its good intentions, has done much to undermine this notion of citizenship. The liberal obsession with purely racial paradigms has weakened it still further. Conservative cynicism has compounded its demise. If the flames of Los Angeles do not spur us to recover it, nothing will."

It is a suggestive and partially persuasive argument. On the eve of the Los Angeles events, this journal addressed these questions in "What Should We Do About the Poor?" We characterized the proposal of a complete cut-off of welfare benefits as the "cold turkey" option favored by some conservatives. We came out against it. The idea that government-provided jobs might replace welfare is not new. One problem with the idea of government as "employer of last resort" is that it is exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to contain the definition of last resort. If jobs are to be "meaningful" and "decently paid" (and most people, especially liberals, will insist that they be that), government-provided jobs will incrementally be made "more attractive" and therefore increasingly compete with employment in the mainstream economy.

That is among the arguments made by the present writer in his forthcoming book *Doing Well and Doing Good: The Challenge to the Christian Capitalist* (Doubleday). There we take up the reasons why John Paul II, in his 1991 encyclical *Centesimus Annus*, comes out so flatly against the idea that the government should be employer of last resort. It may be that Mickey Kaus and *TNR* will demonstrate that they have moved significantly ahead of earlier discussions of government-provided work. It is not promising, however, when *TNR* says it is a matter of returning to FDR and the New Deal. The realities of the urban underclass are hardly comparable to those of mass employment during the Great Depression. Nonetheless, discussions such as that advanced by *TNR* provide welcome evidence that the serious debate about poverty, race, and welfare has left behind the fatuous and destructive dispute about whether we should spend more or less on the cities. The good news in the aftermath of Los Angeles is that we are, just maybe, in the process of disenthraling ourselves from that dispute in which both left and right have been trapped for decades.

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THE REAL WORLD OF THE MIDWEST

A Midwestern reader writes that our commentary is too preoccupied with the quirks of the coasts. "It's not that way out here in the real America," she asserts. We respectfully disagree. When it comes to encountering the great questions in the culture wars, one doesn't have to go to New York or San Francisco anymore to be in New York and San Francisco.

Across the country, it is commonly observed, our cultural tutors take their cues from the coasts. Or maybe it's the other way around. Detroit, for example, would seem to qualify as the presumably real world of the Midwest.

Here is a big Sunday spread, two full pages of unmitigated advocacy, in the *Detroit Free Press* titled "Revolution in Religion." The revolution is that gays and lesbians are forcing Michigan churches to change their teaching on homosexuality and bless same-sex connections. The story features, among others, Pastor Bob Rimbo, assistant to Philip Wahl, the bishop of the Southeast Michigan Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). Pr. Rimbo's "scientific research" has led him to the conclusion that "two men or two women in a monogamous union are the same before God as a married couple." No less a biblical authority than the *Detroit Free Press* informs us that "the oft-cited condemnation of homosexuality in the book of Leviticus is among a series of rules deemed ridiculous for modern times, including bans on eating shellfish and wearing clothes made of two kinds of material."

The patent ridiculousness of the last proscription is underscored. "Rimbo and Wahl glanced down at their attire, which included cotton and polyester. If the Bible was taken literally, they were draped in sin." While wearing polyester is no doubt in seriously bad taste, there is no plausible ground for calling it a sin. The truly grave offense is that of clergy complicity with the media in trivializing Christian teaching on human sexuality. The *Free Press* would have us believe that the dispute over "lifestyle" choices is attributable to "traditional" hangups about how one most pleasurably deploys one's genital plumbing. That human sexuality might, as Paul tells the Ephesians, engage the mystery of Christ's relationship to his Church, that it might image God's creative work in procreation, is quite beyond the ken of the sexual "revolutionaries" and their clerical collaborators. It is much easier to lampoon selected passages from Leviticus.

Pr. Rimbo is involved in an ELCA study reconsidering sexual ethics. Preliminary documents from the national office urged the ELCA to "dialogue" with Scripture and "listen to" those who are unhappy with traditional teaching. (One might

expect Christians to put it the other way around: listen to Scripture and dialogue with those who disagree.) If the church does not agree with him and bless homosexual unions, Pr. Rimbo says he might feel compelled to leave his church post. "I'd be hard pressed to comply with integrity with what the church says. That's how strongly I feel." With that quote, the *Free Press* underscores the threat to the churches if they do not go along with its campaign for the "Revolution in Religion." It apparently does not occur to the editors that most Lutherans might feel thoroughly unthreatened by Pr. Rimbo's threatened departure.

To indicate the impact of the revolution that it has declared, the *Free Press* puts in a sidebar titled "Religious Support" a list of the "growing number of churches and religious groups" that agree with its position on homosexuality. There are five groups on the list: two gay caucuses, one Episcopalian and one Catholic; a non-denominational "Agape Community Church"; a "Simcha Jewish"; and of course the small homosexual denomination, Metropolitan Community Church. Among the several million Christians and thousands of churches in the Detroit area, it is a pretty feeble showing of "Religious Support" for the paper's revolution. Of course there is no denying that there may be thousands of people in unlisted churches who endorse the revolution. But the striking thing for this naive New Yorker is to see what one takes to be a major metropolitan paper pulling out all the stops in advocating a revolutionary assault on Christian teaching. We could not imagine our local parish paper, the *New York Times*, doing that in a manner nearly so crass. But then, perhaps New York and San Francisco will, in due course, catch up with the real America of the great Midwest.

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THE NECESSITY OF MORTALITY

Octogenarian Hans Jonas, distinguished emeritus philosopher at the New School for Social Research, recently held an audience in thrall with a lecture on "The Burden and Blessing of Mortality." Embracing an evolutionary scheme, he suggested that all organisms exist by virtue of an elementary act of trust in Being. With the advent of metabolizing life, there appeared an aspiration toward something higher. "I am inclined to suspect the infinitesimal beginning of it in the earliest self-sustaining and self-replicating cells—a germinal inwardness, the

faintest glimmer of diffused subjectivity long before it concentrated in brains as its specialized organs." According to the "materialist axiom," consciousness remains inexplicable. "In other words," says Jonas, "evolutionary mechanics, as understood by its proponents, explains the evolution of brains, but not of consciousness." Subjectivity and consciousness may be viewed as evolutionary "means" to the "end" of survival, but Jonas suggests that means and ends cannot be so neatly distinguished.

"Such 'means' of survival as perception and emotion, understanding and will, command of limbs and discrimination of goals are never to be judged as means merely, but also as qualities of the life to be preserved and therefore as aspects of the end. . . . The self-rewarding experience of the means in action make the preservation they promote more worthwhile. Whatever the changing contents, whatever the tested utility, awareness as such proclaims its own supreme worth." Awareness as such is not too far from what some theologians have called the Absolute, and Jonas not too far from affirming human aspiration and destiny as communion with God. In fact, that may be exactly what he is saying, whether he knows it or not.

One suspects he may know it. His reflection begins with a reference to Psalm 90, "Teach us to number our days, that we may get a heart of wisdom." And to know our days is to know that we will die, says Jonas. The alternative is too awful to contemplate. He cites Jonathan Swift's "harrowing description" of Gulliver's encounter with the Struldbrugs or "Immortals" who are doomed to live on, and on, and on. For the sake of civilization, the old must give place to the vitalities of the young. But also, considered only egotistically, the prospect of living two or three times an expected lifetime is not a happy one. There is a finite capacity for experience and memory. We would have to have technicians who could periodically clear the mind (like a computer memory) of its old contents to make place for the new.

"The simple truth of our finiteness is that we could, by whatever means, go on interminably only at the price of either *losing* the past and therewith our identity, or living *only* in the past and therefore without a real present. We cannot seriously wish either and thus not a physical enduring at that price. It would leave us stranded in a world we no longer understand even as spectators, walking anachronisms who have outlived themselves. It is a changing world because of the newcomers who keep arriving and who leave us behind. Trying to keep pace with them is doomed to inglorious failure, especially as the pace has quickened so much."

It is a duty of civilization to combat premature death as much as possible. But then he adds, "As to our mortal condition as such, our understanding can have no quarrel about it with creation unless life

itself is denied. As to each of us, the knowledge that we are here but briefly and a nonnegotiable limit is set to our expected time may even be necessary as the incentive to number our days and make them count." And, although Hans Jonas does not quite say it, such living is the means that participates in the End that surpasses our days.

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WITHOUT BORGES

We are told that not everybody reads Arkansas' *Pine Bluff Commercial* where Paul Greenberg was, until recently, the editorial page editor. A shame. But his column is syndicated and he has even appeared in these pages. Those who have been missing Greenberg can remedy their deprivation by getting *Resonant Lives: 50 Figures of Consequence*, which gathers together wonderful little column-essays on people named, inter alia, Becket, Borges, Fulbright, Kennan, Lincoln, Mencken, Moynihan, Nixon, Orwell, Swaggart, and Wallenberg. Here is Greenberg on the death of Jorge Luis Borges:

"Borges was never enthusiastic about any political system; he just knew what he didn't like—totalitarianism, nationalism, or anything else that would not leave people alone. He preferred to call his country the Argentine, a place name, rather than Argentina, with its national overtones. He was not more enthusiastic about the generals' war to conquer the Falklands than he had been about Perón, but he was not much interested in politicking. Giving a lecture in the United States, he was badgered by a young radical—it must have been the sixties—who wanted him to endorse some particular utopianism. 'Does your cause have a flag?' he wanted to know. 'Yes,' said the radical, who was about to explain its deep significance when Borges said: 'Then it can't be my cause.'

"Born into two cultures, if not more, he had as his personal code politeness, tolerance, and a refusal to reduce man to the abstract. 'I don't think I'm capable of abstract thinking,' he once said. That he was denied the Nobel Prize, presumably because he would not mouth the correct slogans, became an international embarrassment—for the Nobel committee. His manners remained unaffected, his stories continued to tell of wonders and horrors, mainly those in the minds of men. He was sheltered by his mother, who would live to be almost one hundred. To her, he was always El Niño, The Lad. Slowly he retreated, or maybe the word is advanced, into a world of memory and imagination, always refining his view, simplifying his language, till his

stories were ever starker, more powerful, more stirring. He saw worlds within worlds, translucent, dizzying, and frightening. . . .

"The loneliness of man was not strange to Borges, who more than once tried to imagine in turn the terrible loneliness of God. His was a strange calling: historian of the soul. Was Borges poet, storyteller, critic, seer? Or simply a blind old man, frail after years of exploration, who had finally reached the center of his labyrinth in time?

"What is certain is only that the world is suddenly flat, dismal, one-dimensional in his absence, and civilization and its dreams poorer. *Tiempo Argentino* in Buenos Aires headlined its Sunday edition with the one salient, indisputable fact about the world in the wake of the news: 'Without Borges.' He leaves us with echoes upon echoes, tastes upon tastes, and marvelous stories that—more marvelous—are about ourselves."

Resonant Lives (187 pp.) is available for \$19.95 from the Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1015 15th Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20005.

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AMONG THE PHILANTHROPOIDS

John D. MacArthur, it seems, was a truly strange fellow. Living parsimoniously, he accumulated hundreds of millions of dollars, now liberally expended by the foundation that bears his name. The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation is best known for its "genius" awards to people who have done putatively brilliant things and might still have a trick or two in their bags. MacArthur, an eccentric right-winger, might have had some misgivings about what is being done with his money. The foundation is perhaps the most notorious, or famous, leftist source of big bucks in America, as explained by Joshua Muravchik in *The American Spectator*. Muravchik ends with this:

"Late in 1991, the foundation awarded \$100,000 to a juvenile justice reform project run by Bernardine Dohrn. Those too far from the cutting edge may have trouble recalling that Miss Dohrn, as leader of the Weather Underground in the 1960s, once declared war on the United States. At a public meeting before going underground she celebrated the Charles Manson family's murder of Sharon Tate as a paradigm of revolutionary daring. According to the account of the Weathermen by Peter Collier and David Horowitz, it was Dohrn herself who planted the bomb that destroyed part of the U.S. Capitol.

Given that John D. MacArthur's clearest political philosophy seems to have been his antipathy to big government, it might be said that Miss Dohrn had the courage of his convictions, and that the foundation had finally found a way to express fidelity to its benefactor."

The question of fiduciary responsibility in the worlds of philanthropy and education is hardly new. Consider, for example, the constituting purpose to which Harvard University was once solemnly pledged. The Capital Research Center has recently published *The Culture of Philanthropy*, a study led by Stanley Rothman of Smith College. The team examined the 225 foundations that made grants of more than one million dollars during the mid-1980s in the field of public policy. They found that most of the money (\$212 million) went to groups with a politicized agenda, and four times more dollars went to liberal groups than to conservative groups. (The team was fair—to the point of scrupulosity—in defining what counts as liberal and what as conservative.)

In addition to MacArthur, the big foundations on the left include Ford, Roderick MacArthur, ARCO, Carnegie, Rockefeller Family Fund, Rockefeller Foundation, Pew Memorial Trust, Henry J. Kaiser, Joan B. Kroc, Richard King Mellon, and Andrew W. Mellon. Commenting on the study in *Forbes*, Michael Novak writes:

"You have to ask yourself, were the donors of these funds—Joseph N. Pew, Henry Ford, Ray Kroc, Andrew Mellon—as liberal as those who now spend their fortunes? Did they want their fortunes spent this way? Even more important, what could they have done to prevent it? At present, very little. They cannot trust their trustees, the foundation staffs, or the courts. Trustees win many benefits from giving to liberal causes: intellectual prestige, free seats at the opera, television coverage. Foundation staffs tend to be made up of bright persons trying to avoid a 'grubby' business career, in order to find more 'noble' work 'helping' others. Against these pressures the courts at present do little to enforce fidelity to the donors' intentions. My hope is that sometime some single state will do for fund donors what Delaware does for corporations—provide a legal structure that would enforce a donor's legal intentions for the distribution of his fortune. Such fiduciary seriousness would be a boon for that state, attracting many foundations. It would be greeted with joy by those already contemplating sadly how their fortunes will be spent to advance causes they have opposed with a passion all their lives."

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WHILE WE'RE AT IT

■ The "mission statement" of Holy Names College in Oakland, California, declares that the school is "committed to the humanistic and spiritual values of Catholicism." ("When I hear the word 'values,' I reach for my Bible," says a colleague, borrowing from Goebbels.) Holy Names' chief claim to notoriety is that it is the home of Father Matthew Fox and his Institute on Culture and Creation Spirituality. Father Fox is being given a hard time by church authorities who decline to be persuaded that, for instance, witch covens are the sacramental equivalent of the eucharistic assembly. But the catalogue indicates that the Institute does offer interesting courses. There is, for instance, "Massage as Meditation" and "Core Energetics and Holotropic Breathing." What we take to be the generic course in the explosion of coastal spiritualities is simply titled "New Consciousness." It is passing wonderful how capacious is the category of "the humanistic and spiritual values of Catholicism."

■ The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, like many other black organizations, has come upon hard times, as evident in declining membership, declining funds, and increasing organizational fractiousness. Columnist William Raspberry suggests that the NAACP and others in the old civil rights establishment are fighting yesterday's wars in their unrelenting polemics against a racist society, etc. "The leading cause of death of young black men is not the Klan but young black men themselves. Our neighborhoods are terrorized not by white-sheeted nightriders but by drive-by gunmen who look like our own children. Our problems fester within our community, but our focus remains outside on those who no longer see much justice in our demands. As the Rev. Buster Soaries of Trenton once put it, 'We are still telling old Pharaoh to 'let my people go,' when what we need are leaders with the courage to say, 'My people: Let Pharaoh go.'"

■ So, asks a reader, where does one find literature on homosexuality that does not conclude that the course of Christian faithfulness is the course of doing what comes unnaturally? We, in turn, asked a friend who has years of experience in the pastoral care of homosexual persons. He says that there are more wise books for Christians struggling with homosexuality than is generally thought. Among those recommended: John Harvey, *The Homosexual Person: New Thinking in Pastoral Care* (Ignatius Press); Benedict Groeschel, *The Courage to Be Chaste* (Paulist); Gerard van den Aardweg, *Homosexuality and Hope* (Servant); Leanne Payne, *The Broken Image* (Crossway).

■ Several years ago Randy Shilts wrote the best-selling *And the Band Played On*. It is a book about

the beginning of the AIDS epidemic, but is also very much worth reading as an account of the subcultural reality of what is euphemistically termed "the gay lifestyle." Now Shilts reflects on the public response to the death of Kimberly Bergalis some months ago. It will be remembered that Ms. Bergalis contracted AIDS from her dentist. She and her family were widely quoted as protesting her suffering from the disease despite the fact that she "didn't do anything wrong." Shilts comments: "Gay men express their love differently from the majority, it's true, but those who contracted AIDS didn't do anything 'wrong.' People who were infected by H.I.V. from dirty needles usually committed the 'wrong' of being black or Hispanic in a society that offers them largely despair and poverty. Their plight is no less tragic than Ms. Bergalis'." It is a logic not without interest. Nobody did anything wrong, except, of course, society. Ms. Bergalis is not at fault, as the patrons of homosexual bath houses are not at fault. If there is wrong, it is the "wrong" of what a person is, not of what a person does. If one is black or Hispanic, "society" offers little alternative to becoming an intravenous drug user. And so the catechism of victimology erases all moral distinctions. Mr. Shilts ends on the note that Americans should "extend to all people dying of AIDS the same compassion that [Ms. Bergalis] received." Yes, the same compassion, but not the same discernment of moral responsibility. If compassion is contingent upon denying the truth that behavior has consequences, there will be much less compassion in the world than is, lamentably, already the case.

■ The Lilly Endowment has been doing research on the state of the black church, and C. Eric Lincoln of Duke University comments on some of the findings: "The future of the clergy in general is equally problematic. Black Christendom has an aging clergy (the median age is 52) and is 'barely replenishing' the ranks because there are so many other opportunities for black college graduates today," Lincoln says. And since only one-fifth of black pastors have seminary degrees, they are lagging behind a growing number of their congregants in educational level. Despite the stereotype of the high-living preacher, the survey found the vast majority of pastors have modest incomes and some 40 percent hold down second jobs to make ends meet. There is a shocking lack of medical insurance (available to only one-fourth) and pension coverage (provided to a mere 15.7 percent of pastors in the survey). Both are in stark contrast with the situation in white denominations. This economic reality, Lincoln observes, forces pastors to cling to their jobs long past normal retirement age, undermining the vitality of their congregations.

■ We are told that we should not gloat over the

demise of Marxism in theory and practice. "So when do I get my chance to gloat?" asks a friend. Good question. If reporting with a certain pleasure on the discomfort of peddlers of discredited fatuities counts as gloating, we may be guilty in taking note of Stephen P. Dunn, a director of social science research in Berkeley, California. Mr. Dunn writes to our local newspaper to protest an article on how intellectuals are responding to the death of Communism. He complains that the people interviewed "never accepted the validity of the Soviet experiment in the first place." "Therefore," he continues, "they haven't learned anything new from the recent events in the Soviet Union and have merely had their prejudices confirmed. Essentially, what they're saying to the rest of us is, 'We told you so,' which is a mean-spirited and not very illuminating statement, even when it's true." Especially when it is true, we might add. If these anti-Marxists are right, Mr. Dunn faces the awful prospect of a world that he cannot explain. He writes: "If we are witnessing the end of 'the all-encompassing model to explain human behavior,' the implications of this are simply shattering, given that we're now well on the way to building an all-encompassing model to explain the structure and dynamics of the natural world. If human behavior, alone among the elements of this world, is fundamentally inexplicable, then the entire Western philosophical tradition is called into grave question. I'm convinced that the Marxist hypothesis can be effectively replaced only by a better hypothesis of equal scope, and that until that happens, Marxism will retain its intellectual force and attraction for those who think in terms of broad hypotheses." If human behavior were not fundamentally inexplicable, Mr. Dunn's argument would be, well, inexplicable.

■ British author A. N. Wilson has written a slew of books on religious subjects, including a curious biography of C. S. Lewis. Now he announces that he has jettisoned religion *en toto* as a fraudulent and exploitative enterprise that no serious intellectual should credit for a moment. The conclusion of the essay in which he declares his newly discovered irreligion raises to new levels the definition of serious intellectuality (those mentioned at the end are prominent Protestants in the U.K.): "But we can do our best to ignore all such moral blackmail, and all the threats of ayatollahs, popes, and mullahs by being as consistently and truthfully offensive as we can. We cannot stop the Pope appearing on his balcony and telling us how to think and behave, any more than we can stop *fatwas* being issued from the Ayatollah. But we can do more than turn a deaf ear to them when they do so. We can cheer when their own people have the spirit to rebel against them, and we can boo whenever these religious bullies open their mouths. It is true that they are frightening, particularly when they issue threats of

death. But it is a definition of cowardice that we should feel frightened of saying boo to a goose. The Pope is a very powerful goose. The Ayatollah Khomeini is an even greater goose. Mrs. Whitehouse is a minor goose. The Reverend Tony Higon and Ian Paisley are noisy little ganders. Boo, boo, boo to them all."

■ Now is the time to praise neglected men, and women. Actually, we are almost a year late for Father Lazlo Ladany who died in Hong Kong last September at age 76. Way back in the early 1970s, we worked with a journal called *Worldview*, and there we published articles by, among others, Ivan and Miriam London. The Londons, like Fr. Ladany in his *China News Analysis*, documented the horrors of famine and ideological campaigns in which millions of Chinese died under Chairman Mao. That was a time when almost the entire sinological establishment in the West was hailing the great achievements of Maoism, and our oldline churches were routinely and "prophetically" declaring him to be a "Christ figure" who had brought salvation down to earth. Ladany, the Londons, and people like Olga and Blaho Hruby (who did the same unwelcome research on the ghastliness of Communism in East Europe) were viciously pilloried as anti-Communist right wingers, when they could not be entirely ignored. Ivan London, Blaho Hruby, and now Lazlo Ladany are dead. They told the truth and they have been vindicated. They were prophets against the flatulent false prophecy of our religious and academic elites who betrayed the poor of the world in the name of the poor of the world. Not so much for their sake as for ours, those who told the truth must be remembered, and honored.

■ The *Boston Globe* went to interview Judge Edmund Reggie, father of Victoria Reggie, fiancée of Senator Ted Kennedy. Yes, he knows all the dirt about the Senator's "womanizing." "When does dating become womanizing?" the Judge asks derisively. He does not wait for an answer. He says he has known the man for many years and nobody has a better record than Kennedy when it comes to supporting the rights of women. "So, how do I feel about Vickie marrying a person who's been dating a great deal? Well, if you look at Ted Kennedy's commitment record as a U.S. Senator, I don't know of a member of the Senate who's been there 30 years who's more committed to a more definable or predictable position than Ted Kennedy. So he's a person capable of the finest definition of commitment, and marriage is the ultimate commitment." Speaking of Joan and ultimate commitments, the Judge is unhappy with Bernard Cardinal Law who has been quoted as saying that in the eyes of the Church Kennedy is still married to her and is therefore not free to marry Vickie. "Do you

think you would have heard that if Cardinal Cushing were alive?" asks the judge. "Poor Cardinal Law. He's just so out of step. We've known him since he was a parish priest in Mississippi, and he used to be a very progressive fellow." There was, we are given to understand, none of that indissolubility of marriage nonsense with good old Cardinal Cushing.

■ "And I came before you to talk of what was not a Christian or a Jewish war, not a Muslim war. It was a just war. And in the Persian Gulf we fought for good versus evil—it was that clear to me—right versus wrong, dignity against oppression. And America stood fast so that liberty could stand tall. And today, I want to thank you for helping America, as Christ ordained, to be 'a light unto the world.' " President Bush's discovery of what Christ has ordained would be of theological interest were it not so patently political balderdash. Balderdash spiced with nationalistic hubris, a generous sprinkling of mendacity, and more than a hint of blasphemy. He also told the annual convention of religious broadcasters that "the word for 1992 is: Today, the times are on the side of peace because the world, increasingly, is on the side of God." Really? As if that were not enough, he quotes no less a spiritual authority than Walt Whitman to the effect that it is religion that gives America its "real and permanent grandeur." Who writes this stuff for our President of singular rhetorical ineptitude? The report says that thousands of Christian leaders, mainly evangelicals, responded with standing ovations. One hopes that they felt themselves to be caught in something of a dilemma. They wanted to indicate moral and political support for Bush, which may be fair enough considering the alternatives. But surely they must have winced at his vulgar exploitation of civil religion. If he really believes what he said, the problem is even more serious. Liberty, especially religious liberty, "stands tall" in, for example, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia? We are quite prepared to make the case for the justice of the Gulf War, and we do not expect this President or any President to match Lincoln's nuanced discernment of America as an "almost chosen nation," but when political braggadocio attempts to recruit Providential purpose one may be forgiven for contemplating the merits of the naked public square. Putting religious integrity before political partisanship, the broadcasters would have done better to sit on their hands.

■ When Peter J. Gomes, the minister of Memorial Church at Harvard University, publicly declared earlier this year that he is homosexual, it created quite a sensation. Although the forty-nine-year-old Gomes claims that he has never been sexually active, he has quickly become a champion of Harvard gays and lesbians, and seems to relish attacks by conservative Christian students who formerly viewed him as a spiritual mentor. Says Gomes, "I now have

an unambiguous vocation, a mission, to address the religious causes and roots of homophobia. I'm convinced the rot is from within the church tradition, not outside it. I will devote the rest of my life to addressing the 'religious case' against gays." Opposition frequently forces people to clarity. There is poignancy in the observation that, after twenty years of preaching evangelical Christianity at Harvard, Gomes only now senses that he has an "unambiguous vocation."

■ Editorializing on the brownshirts of the campus sensitivity patrols, *National Review* notes that the "fascists" are meeting with resistance here and there. For instance, "The National Association of Scholars (Princeton, N.J.) has been expending its membership rapidly." While the NAS has experienced gratifying growth, we do hope that it is carefully targeting those expended scholars.

■ When in Dallas one reads the *Dallas Morning News*. This morning there is a story about Jamie Tellier, a fourteen-year-old who has been suspended from school for handing out anti-abortion literature. Pictures of chopped up babies, that kind of thing. Explained school officials, "She was passing out extremely graphic and explicit material that is not appropriate for that age level." Principal Beverly Sellers asked Jamie to consider passing out literature without the pictures. "I've tried that before and it's just not as effective," said Jamie, who heads Teens Rescuing Unborn Tiny Humans, or TRUTH. What is appropriate, apparently, for the age level in question is the availability of abortion without knowing what abortion does. (Texas also has no parental notification law for teens getting abortions.) Were she pregnant, Jamie could get an abortion, but she cannot hand out literature against abortion. The school district in question distributes condoms to teens and insists upon utmost candor in sex education. Somewhere Jamie Tellier got the idea that abortion has something to do with the consequences of sex. Her teachers are trying to help her understand that her advocacy of chastity and adoption is "disruptive" of the educational process. We would not be surprised if Jamie gets herself certified as ineducable. The same edition of the *News* has a story on some fishermen in Shawnee, Oklahoma, who found a package containing 173 dead babies near a dump. The fishermen noticed a little hand sticking out and thought at first it was a box of toys. The abortionist, who says he tried to burn the remains, claims it is not easy to find ways to dispose of his handiwork. Texas has more sanitary ways of handling these matters. "What the gentleman up in Oklahoma did could not be done here," said Pat Garland, a special waste officer at the Texas Water Commission. "Special waste officer"—it has a nice clean ring. Daniel Eddy, who runs Planned Parenthood in Oklahoma, called the discovery of the

corpses "a tragic example of a lack of professionalism and sensitivity. Those who oppose choice pick up on incidents such as this to justify their position, but those of us who are pro-choice are just as offended by it as are our opponents." Considering what it so graphically says about abortion, we would not be surprised if Mr. Eddy were even more offended by the incident.

■ We have previously noted the controversy over Georgetown University's giving official recognition and support to a pro-abortion student group, GU Choice. The organization has now been disbanded. We are reliably informed that, contrary to some press accounts and statements by university officials, the Holy See had a very direct and assertive role in the decision to disband the group. In Rome and elsewhere, the university's earlier claim that a Catholic school had to sponsor a pro-abortion organization in order to make sure that students were exposed to views contrary to the Church's teaching was not deemed to be amusing.

■ We hesitate to draw attention again to the parochial world of the *New York Times*, but some items simply beg for notice. Under the latest Sulzberger to run this richest of rags, the *Times* has for the first time allowed straightforward homosexual advocacy in its news columns. We will not be surprised if, within a year or less, the weddings and engagements page includes "same-sex unions." And a case can perhaps be made for it in a paper that purports to publish "all the news that's fit to print." There is no doubt that the homosexual subculture is a big part of what is happening in the general culture, and especially in New York. We were struck by a recent story celebrating the red ribbon that a lot of people were wearing for a while. You may remember Jerry Brown sporting the red ribbon during his campaign. And at the Academy and Grammy awards it seemed that everyone had one. The red ribbon presumably signalled that one cared about people with AIDS, distinguishing one from those who do not care about people with AIDS. The *Times* comments: "Crosses took almost two millennia to change from handmade icons of fervent belief into abstract decoration worn anywhere but church. In less than one year, the AIDS ribbon has come nearly as far." The statement is ludicrous of course. But consider that, to some people in the stylish little worlds of the *Times*, it apparently seems that the AIDS ribbon is as culturally pervasive as the cross, maybe more so. Many social critics measure the decline of the culture by the decline of the *Times*. On Tuesdays and Thursdays we are tempted to agree. The more likely truth, however, is that the *Times* and the mass media that it so powerfully influences are rapidly spinning into their own orbit far removed—although not yet safely removed—from the world occupied by us ordinary mortals.

■ Within broad limits, we do not accept responsibility for what is advertised in the pages of this journal. But there are limits. There are no ads for cigarettes or liquor (despite the fact that more than one member of the editorial board think that a Beefeater martini desperately dry, straight up with a twist, is a distinguished grace note in God's creative purposes). And we irritated a publisher by refusing an ad for a book that we deemed a reckless attack on homosexuals. More recently we declined an ad for a writer's sophomoric and scurrilous diatribe against his political opponents (including this writer). Is this censorship? Of course it is. Is it discrimination? We certainly hope so. Censoring and discriminating is what editors do, and we trust that every aspect of the journal indicates that we are not shirking our duty. There is great leeway when it comes to advertising, but it is not unlimited.

■ Here's an invitation to a conference sponsored by the Center of Concern at Georgetown University. The title is "Beyond Tomorrow: The Future of Social Justice." Apparently tomorrow doesn't look very promising. Speakers include distinguished authorities on Catholic social teaching such as Judy Woodruff of public television, David Halberstam, author of *The Next Century*, and Patricia Derian, who launched and almost sank the State Department's human rights office in the Jimmy Carter administration. The conference planners have carefully targeted two subjects to be addressed: first, "The State of the World"; second, "The Major Trends in Economics, Politics, and Culture, Especially Mass Media." The invitation adds the

assurance, "The respondents will highlight their implications for the Third World." Good. It seemed for a moment that they might have left something out. The conference runs from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. Presumably "the state of the world" gets the first two hours. We decided not to go.

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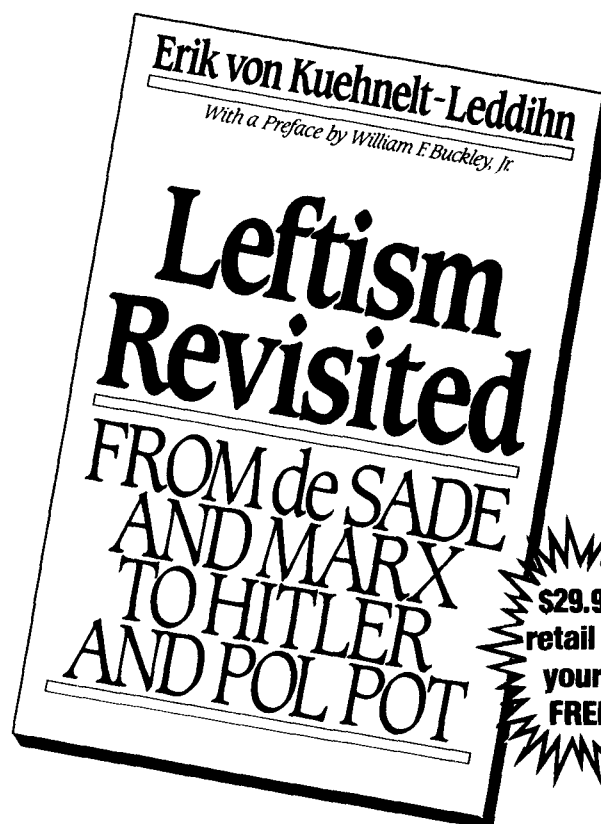
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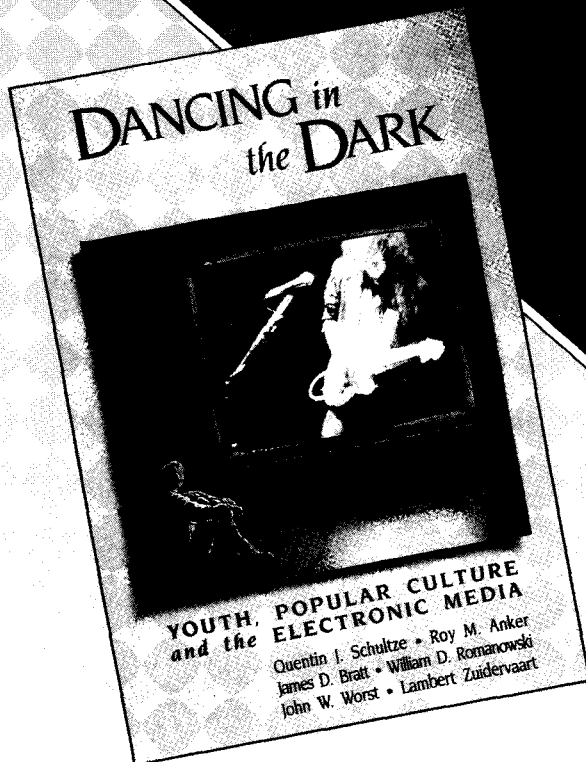
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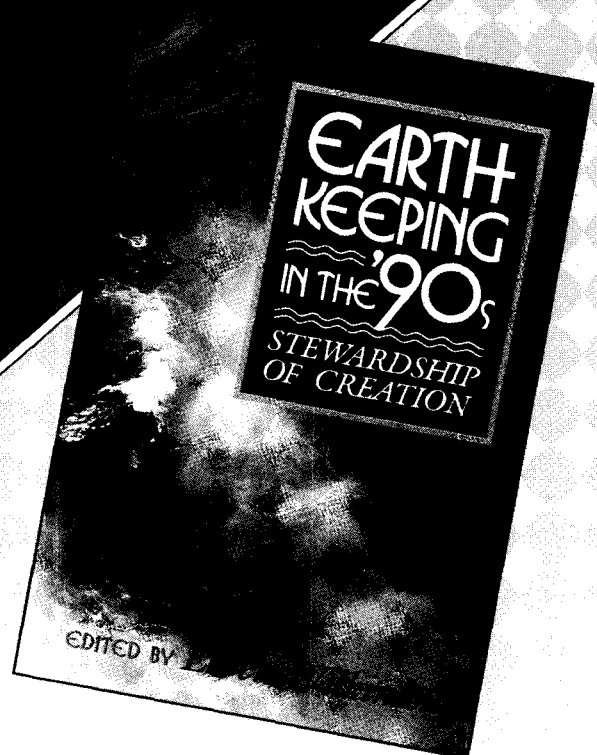
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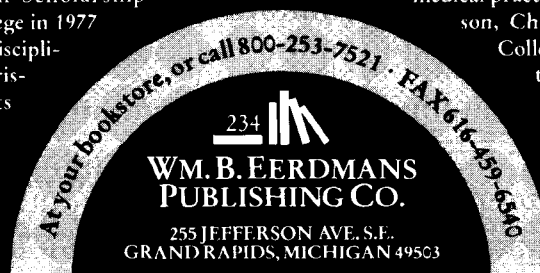
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